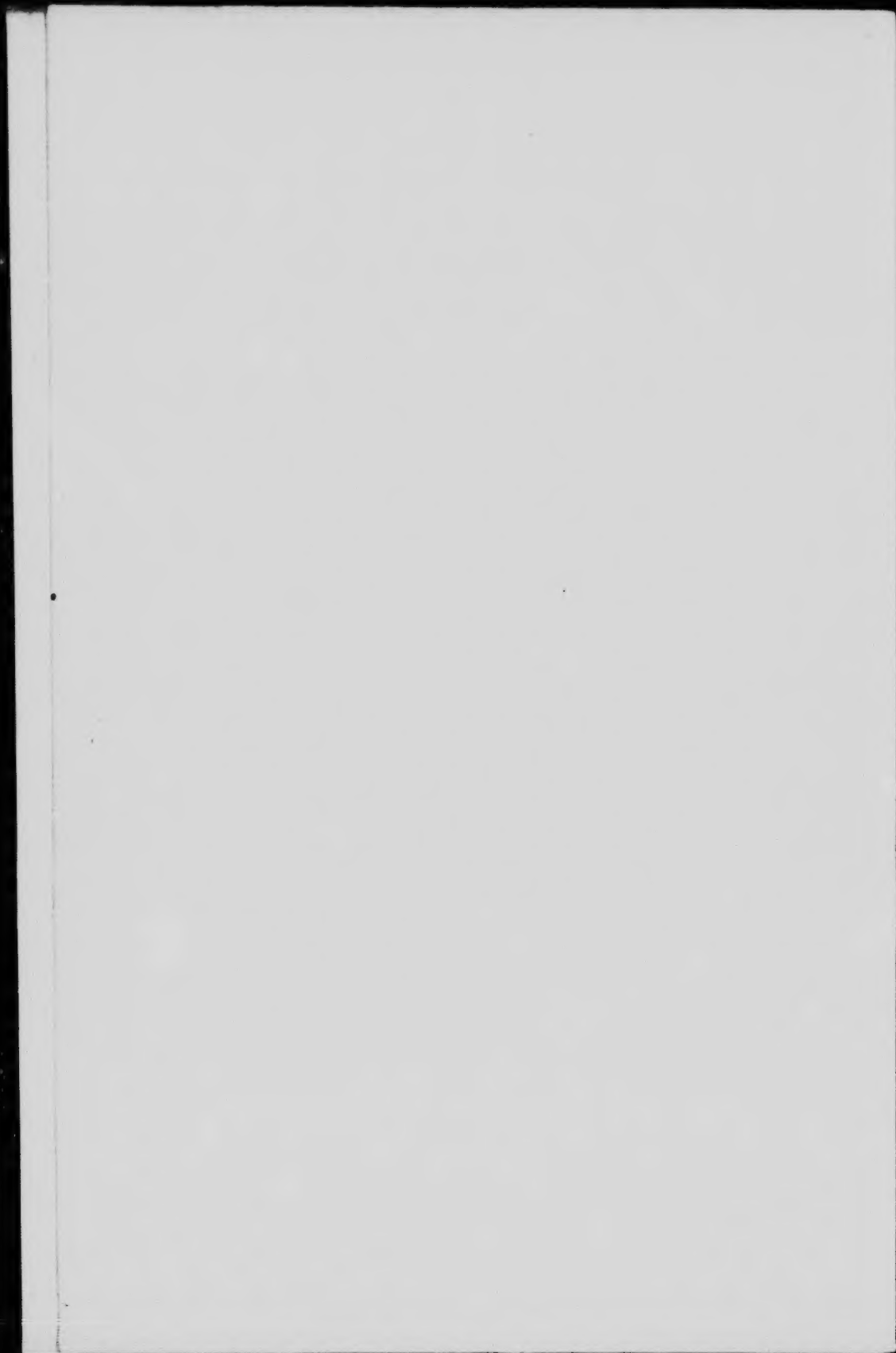
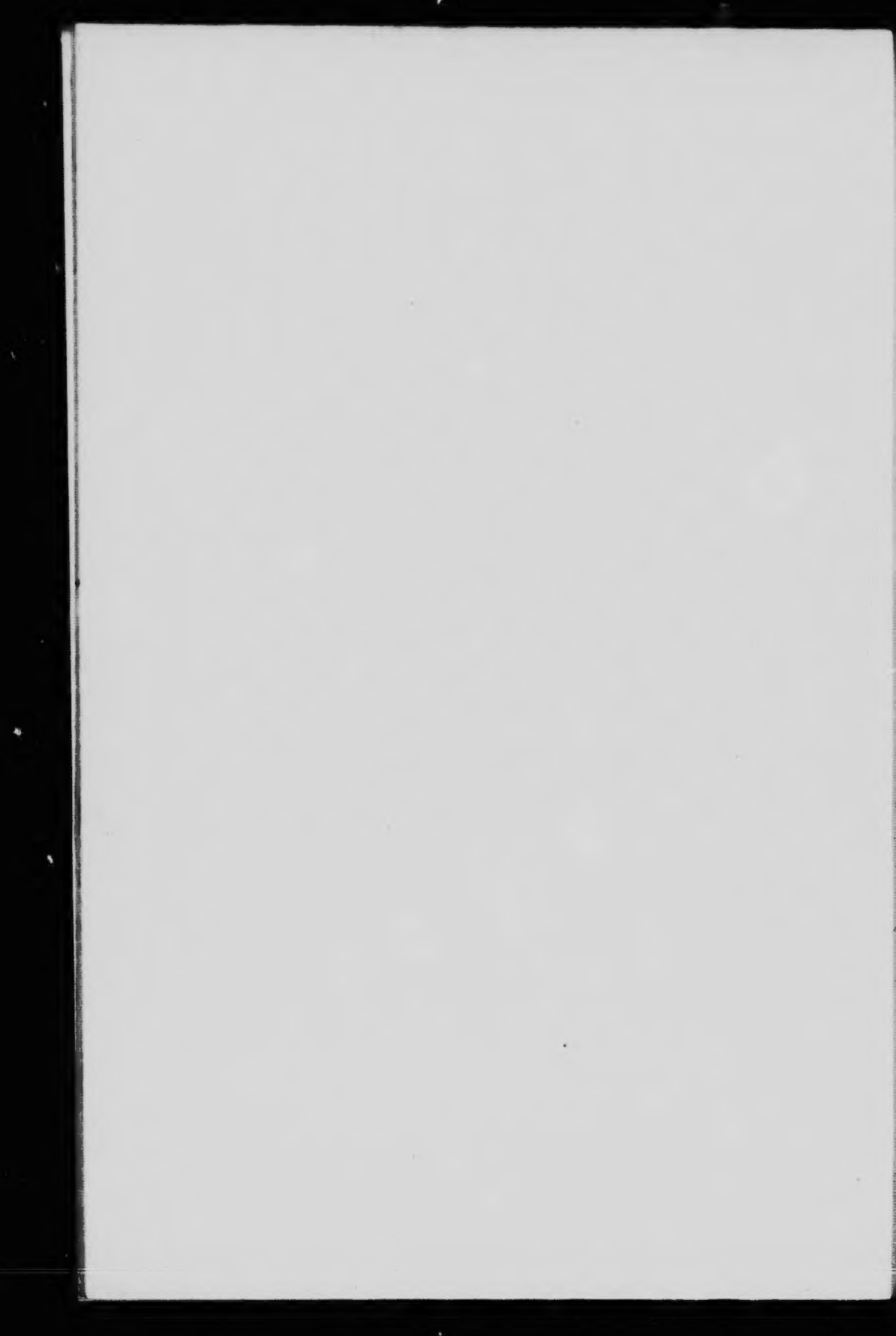


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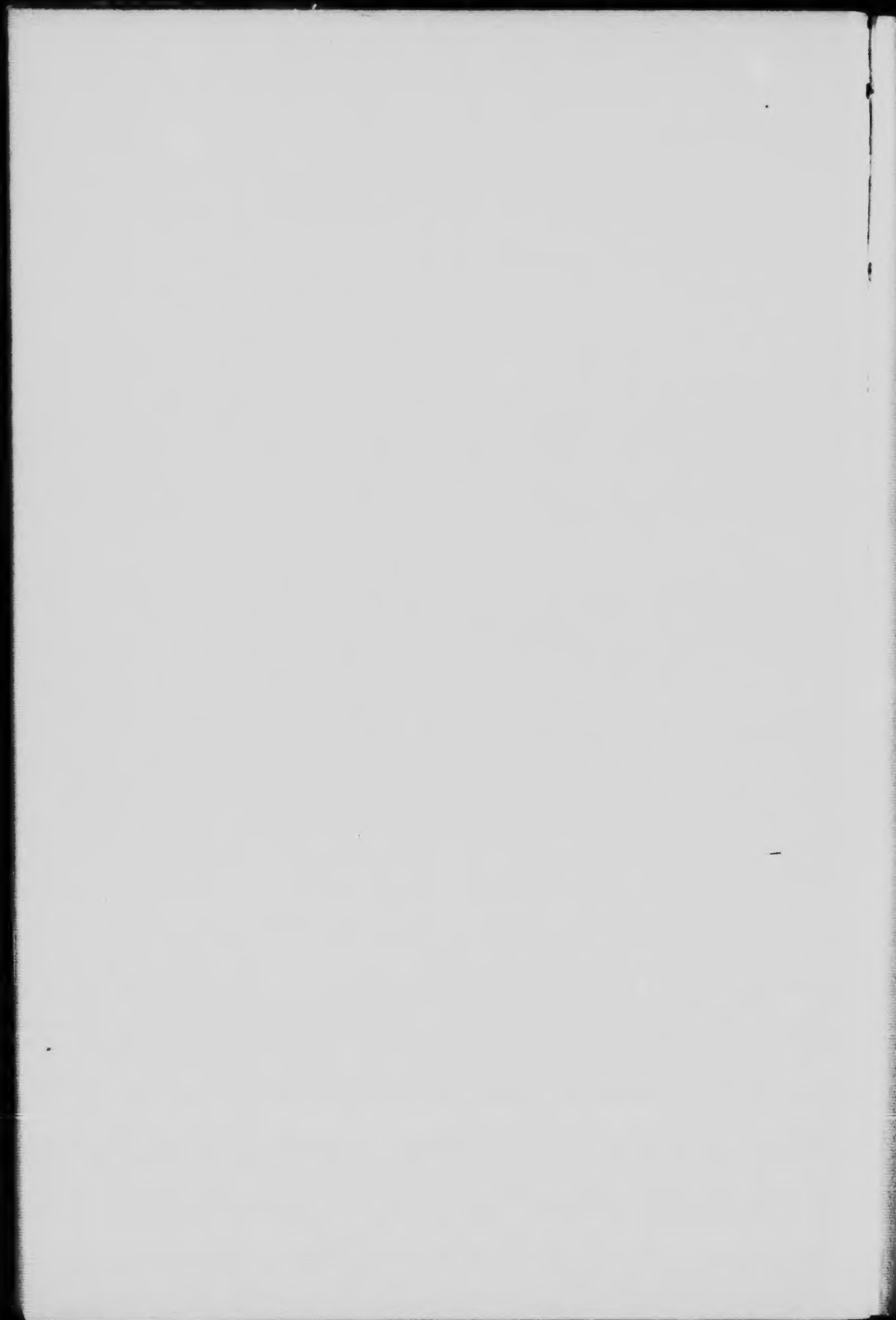








THE PLOWSHARE
AND THE SWORD



THE PLOWSHARE AND THE SWORD

A TALE OF OLD QUEBEC

BY

ERNEST GEORGE HENHAM

"Empire and Love! the vision of a day."—Young

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THE PLOWSHARE AND THE SWORD

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CHAPTER I.

THE FATHER OF WATERS.

It was an evening of spring in the year of strife 1637. The sun was slowly withdrawing his beams from the fortress of Quebec, which had been established some thirty years back, and was then occupied by a handful of settlers and soldiers, to the number of 120, under the military governorship of Arnaud de Roussillac. The French politicians of the seventeenth century were determined colony builders. However humble the settler, he was known and watched, advanced or detained, by the vigilant government of Paris. The very farms were an extension, however slight, of the militarism of France, and a standing menace to Britain. Where, further south, Englishmen founded a rude settlement, the French in the north had responded by a military post. The policy of peace taught by that intrepid adventurer, Jacques Cartier, exactly a hundred years before, had become almost forgotten. "This country is now owned by your Majesty," Cartier had written. "Your Majesty has only to make gifts to the headmen of the

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Iroquois tribes and assure them of your friendship, to make the land yours for ever."

But Samuel de Champlain, the colony-maker who followed Cartier, was a man of pride who understood how to make war, but had left unlearned the greater art of adding for peace. In 1609, acting under what he believed to be a flash of genius, Champlain brought against the Iroquois the Algonquins, their bitter hereditary enemies; and with their aid, and the use of the magic firearms which had never before been heard in the country of the wild north, he had utterly defeated the proud and unforgiving people who had won the admiration and respect of Cartier the pioneer, thus making the tribes of the Iroquois confederacy sworn enemies of France for ever. Had Providence been pleased to make Samuel de Champlain another Cartier, had the latter even succeeded the former, Canada, from the rough Atlantic seaboard to the soft Pacific slope, might well have been one great colony of France to-day.

It was, however, not the past history of that land, nor even its present necessities, which occupied the mind of the Abbé La Salle, great-uncle of the future Robert of that name, who, half-a-century later, was to discover the mighty river of Mississippi—which was to deprive the St. Lawrence of its proud birth-title, the Father of Waters—and explore the plains of Michigan. The abbé was lying, that spring evening, on the heights, smoking a stone pipe filled with coarse black tobacco from Virginia, and watching a heavy ship which rocked upon the swift current where it raced round the bend in the shore. He was

building up a future for himself, a fabric of ambition upon foundations of diplomacy and daring. This senior priest of the fortress—there were two others, Laroche the bully, and St Agapit the ascetic—was a handsome man, powerfully built, of fair complexion marred only by a sword-cut above the left eye. Although priest in name, he was more at his ease flicking a rapier than thumbing a breviary; an oath was habitually upon his tongue; a hot patriot was he, and above all a duellist. He had fought a duel before his early marriage and had left the altar to brag of his prowess. He was, in short, one of the most notorious of that breed of martial Churchmen, imitators of Armand du Maine and Richelieu, for which colonial France at that age was noted. Far from the eye of the mighty Cardinal and the feeble mind of Louis the Just, they swaggered through life, preaching the divine mission of the Church to the natives one hour, drinking deeply, or duelling in terrible earnest, the next. The lives of the fighting priests of Quebec make not the least interesting page of that romance which three centuries have written around the heights.

Wooden huts were dotted thinly along the slopes, which ended where the forest of hemlocks began, about half a mile from the edge of the cliff; and below, where a log landing-stage jutted into the stream, a man-of-war flying the flag of France rode at her ease, a party of turbaned men, no bigger to the abbé's eyes than children, gambling at dice upon her fore-deck. Anchored beside the shore opposite appeared another vessel, more rakish in build, less heavy at the stern, and showing four masts to the French-

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man's tree. A pine branch fluttered at the main truck, and a great bough of hemlock depended over her bows, completely draping the heavy and grotesque figure-head.

It was this latter ship which La Salle was watching with suspicion, as attentively as the distance would permit. The abbé mistrusted all foreigners, even when, as in this case, they came bringing gifts. He had recently been informed of that hasty alliance patched up between France and Holland, and the policy found no favour in his eyes; he frowned to think that a Dutch man-of-war should be permitted to sail up the St. Lawrence and cast anchor beneath the heights. Was there any genuine desire on the part of Holland to strengthen the hands of her new ally, or were the crafty Dutchmen playing some deep game of their own? The Indians, who surrounded the fortress as closely as they dared, were entirely hostile to the holders of the land. Rumours of at least one band of Englishmen, friendly with the natives, hiding in the forest or among the clefts in the rock, waiting to strike a blow when opportunity offered against the servants of King Louis, had been circulated by a French dwarf known by the name of Gaudriole, a malevolent, misshapen creature, who passed unharmed about the country, and escaped hanging merely because of his value as an interpreter of the various native dialects. The Dutch ship, which had arrived only that afternoon, might well have sailed northward with some plan of joining for the time with either Indian or English to wrest the mastery of the maritime provinces from the clutch of France.

While La Salle thus meditated with a mind to his own advancement, his keen ears detected the fall of footsteps over the crisp grass, and he pulled himself round to discover a priest, like himself wearing a sword, a stout man, panting after his long climb.

"What news, Laroche?" called the smoker, indicating the distant warship with the stem of his pipe.

"Corpus Domini!" gasped the new comer. "The sun strikes across yonder rocks like the fire of Gehenna. What news, ask you, of yonder piratical thief of a Dutchman? She is under commission, mark you, to pick a quarrel and fight us for this coast, for all the fair talk of alliance and the chopping up of the Spanish Netherlands between Paris and Holland——"

"What of Roussilac?" broke in La Salle.

"The commandant is now aboard the floating gin-tank, and there you may swear he shall impress upon the mind of Van Vuren, her master, the certain fact that Louis the Thirteenth is lord here, from the sea outward to wherever this endless land may reach. But we know the Hollander. A smooth rascal, who flatters to a man's face, and when his back is turned—*Proh stigmata Salvatoris!* Dost remember the Dutchman who pinked you in the shoulder at Avignon?"

He broke off with the question, and his fat body shook with laughter.

"A priest must remain a priest in Avignon," said La Salle sourly; "but he may here be a man. What news has this Hollander brought?"

"Why, that England is in revolt from end to end," answered Laroche gladly. "We shall find

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none of their clumsy ships, nor any of their barbarian fist-using soldiers here. The people have risen against the king. A man named John Hampden has refused to pay ship-money, a new tax levied to raise a fleet to defy the Pope, the Dutch, and the Cardinal, and this man carries the people with him. Also this Charles has made himself hated in the north by forcing some new form of heresy and insult to his Holiness in the shape of a prayer-book down the throats of the Scotch. All but a handful have fallen away from him, says Van Vuren, even the lords temporal have begun to despair, and many are preparing to set out for the West."

La Salle's martial spirit flamed up. "Here?" he questioned eagerly.

"They would no more dare seek a home here than in Rochelle," went on Laroche. "They go south to take up the lands where the last of their mariners harried the Spaniards. It is reported that Lord Saye and Sele proposes to transport himself to Virginia, Lord Warwick to Connecticut, and the yeomen, weary of heavy taxes and fearing the extortions of the Star Chamber, seek information concerning New England now that the star of the old has set. We hold the seas. France or Holland unaided is strong enough to sink the rotten barques which the English call their fleet. There is no money forthcoming for new ships. Richelieu shall soon rule the world! Come down. We shall perchance obtain a bottle of wine along the Rue des Pêcheurs before vespers."

"I join you at Michel's after sundown," said La Salle. "At this present time I remain in the wilderness."

He stood up, brushed the dry grass from his almost entirely secular costume, and gazed landwards under the wide brim of his hat, until a crow came presently flapping out of the valley where the great forest began. The black bird soared over the heads of the martial priests, and dropped slowly to drink of the river.

"There are finer birds in yonder forest," muttered La Salle, a smile about his mouth.

"Ha! An assignation?" exclaimed the stout priest, and at the suggestion wiped his moist forehead and laughed loudly. Then he turned and rolled away down the slope, shouting a song of the cabaret which had been popular among the soldiers of Paris two years before. La Salle followed his progress with a cynical smile, before he also turned, and descended upon the opposite side out of sight of the river, and crossed the plain where the French were to rule for two centuries more and then to fly with the kilted men of Scotland at their heels. Here the cool hemlock forest murmured, the dense forest which stretched northward to the mud flats of the salt bay named after the adventurer Hudson, whose lost bones were somewhere tossed in its cold and lonely waters. The sun was hidden by the hills, big golden lilies stared at the priest, an indigo-winged butterfly tumbled into shelter to die at the ending of the day. The dew sweated out of the ground, and the foliage smelt like wine.

"This is better than the gutters of Paris," muttered the priest.

The bushes parted at the sounding of his voice, and a radiant vision stood before him, backed by the

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greenwood shade. A young woman, but a few years removed from childhood, stepped forth, hungrily regarding the abbé with a splendid pair of eyes, brown-red and full of fire, and burning with the health and passion of life.

This young maid was Onawa of the Cayugas, that boldest of the tribes of the allied Iroquois, who held the interior under their confederacy, all the plains, backwoods, the river and seaboard, with the exception of those spots where military posts had been established—the small palisaded farm, and even the trader's hut, being marked upon the map as military posts, and made so by the simple order, "*Le roi le veut.*" This girl had been present at the council fire when Roussilac had endeavoured to heal the breach between French and Indians by specious promises, none of which he intended to fulfil; La Salle also had been present, accompanying the commandant as the representative of the Church. The council had been a failure, owing, said the soldiers, to the trickery of Gaudriole, the only interpreter available; but in fact due to the overbearing manner of Roussilac, who fell into Champlain's error of relegating an uncivilised people to the level of animals; and to the innate hatred entertained by the Indians for their conquerors. The Iroquois sachems answered the representative smoothly that they would consider his offer of peace and the terms accompanying the same, and subsequently resolved that, though they might tolerate English and Dutch in their midst, their final answer to the white race who had armed the Algonquins against them could only be made by arrow and tomahawk. Onawa, who because of her sex was

allowed to take no part in the discussion, held aloof, and regarded the figure of La Salle standing haughtily in the yellow glow of the fire. When the deputation withdrew she followed and caught the priest's attention with a smile; and when night fell she was still watching the lights of the rude little town upon the cliffs.

La Salle was no woman's man. He was too healthy a soldier; but he was ambitious, and had moulded his policy upon that of his master, the character which did not shame to describe itself in the unscrupulous terms, "I venture upon nothing till I have well considered it; but when I have once taken my resolution I go directly to my end. I mow down and overthrow all that stands in my way, and then cover the whole with my red mantle." The daughter of an Iroquois chief had great power among her own people, and the priest reflected that he might add some fame to his name and win perhaps the red hat for his head, if he could secure the withdrawal of the hostile tribes; or, better, inflame them against the English, who were, so said report, but awaiting an opportunity to strike at the north. But a difficulty lay in his path; neither he nor Onawa could speak the other's tongue.

But this was not an overwhelming obstacle, because then, as now, the language of signs might make a dumb tongue eloquent. Thus it was not altogether by accident that the handsome abbé came to the fringe of the forest at evening, and it was not chance alone which brought Onawa from the camp into the enemy's country.

She held between her fingers a flower, a lily as

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golden as that emblazoned upon the royal standard ; and while standing before him she placed the flower to her forehead, and then gave it him, without turning away her eyes, and without shrinking from his.

La Salle understood that she was expressing her willingness to give herself to him, with or without the will and consent of her people.

"By St. Anthony !" he muttered. "How shall I tell the jade that I have abjured women? Does she then desire me to strip and paint, that she may make of me a heathen husband?"

He shook his head, and the light changed in the eyes of the girl, and her brow wrinkled. He saw the sudden gleam of her teeth and heard her sigh.

"Jezebel of the forest," he cried, "name me this flower!"

He extended it with a sign, and the ready girl spoke softly a dissyllabic word. La Salle repeated it, again indicating the flower, and Onawa nodded vigorously.

"Ah!" exclaimed the priest. "Here is light out of darkness."

He came nearer and took the girl's hand, making the same sign. She spoke again. He touched her hair. Again she spoke. Then her cheek, her nose, her lips, her ears, and Onawa answered him every time, laughing delightedly as the priest pronounced each soft Iroquois word at her dictation.

"A few such lessons, and Gaudriole may be hanged," said La Salle.

Then, with a quick gesture, Onawa put out her fawn-coloured hand, and touched his right eye with the tip of one finger.

"L'œil," answered La Salle.

She patted his cheek.

"La joue," he said.

She tweaked his nose, with a laugh.

"Le nez," he gasped.

She slapped his mouth.

"La bouche," he growled, adding, "I might have said, 'La grimace.'"

The girl was very near. He caught her and drew her up to him, and pressed his lips powerfully upon hers.

"C'est le baiser," he said carelessly.

The salutation of the kiss was unknown among the Iroquois. Onawa started, thrilling with a feeling altogether strange; then turned to him, putting back her head as a Parisienne might have done to receive her lover's salute.

"Le baiser *again*," she demanded, clinging to the word which had made life a new thing. "Le baiser *again*."

"By all the wiles of Satan!" exclaimed La Salle, thrusting her back. "She is in league with the enemy."

Again he held her before him, his arms slightly bent, and said haltingly in the tongue of the hated race, which he knew little better than the Cayuga: "You speak the English?"

Onawa's face lighted. "A ver' little words," she answered. Then she drew up to him, her eyes more eloquent, and softly repeating her bilingual request:

"Le baiser *again*."

It was dark when La Salle reached the group of

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huts planted upon the cliffs. The warships were invisible and unlighted, because lamps would have revealed figures patrolling upon deck, and there were keen-eyed enemies watching from either shore. The priest stumbled along the rocky path, his long boots kicking the stones before him, until he came near the waterside and the Rue des Pêcheurs, situated immediately below the main cliff on the site occupied to-day by Little Champlain Street. The way was inhabited, as its name implied, by fisher-folk who swept the wide river when times were fairly peaceful, and served as soldiers in war. There was no street in the accepted sense of the word. A few cave dwellings burrowed out of the rock; huts here and there, a tent, or a simple erection of sticks and stones plastered over with mud, were barely visible, sprinkled irregularly, out of the darkness along the high shore.

Where a worn pathway went round and curved towards the landing-stage, a square log-hut occupied some considerable portion of space. A very dull lamp smoked over the entry, below a board bearing the inscription, "Michel Ferraud, Marchand du Vin." A grumbling noise of conversation and the rattle of dice sounded within.

"Deuce and three for the third time!" shouted the high-pitched voice of the Abbé Laroche. "I'll throw you again, Dutchman—one more throw for the honour of the Church; and the devil seize me if this box plays me the trick again."

La Salle bent his head and entered the cabaret. He made two steps, then stood motionless, his fingers feeling for his sword-hilt.

Laroche looked up, the dice-box poised in his fat right hand, and a smile wandered across his face at beholding the attitude of his fellow-priest.

"The master of the Dutch man-of-war," he called, indicating the player who sat opposite him. "Sieur," he shouted over the table, with a burst of unctuous laughter, "the renowned swordsman, L'Abbé La Salle."

Then Van Vuren looked up.

CHAPTER II.

AN ENEMY IN THE CAMP.

At sunset Roussilac, the commandant of Quebec, after receiving reassuring reports from the sentries and thus closing his official duties for the day, went aboard the man-of-war. Having personally superintended the shipping of the gangway, to satisfy himself that immediate communication with the shore was cut off, he withdrew to his cabin, which he occupied in preference to his hut upon the slope. Before retiring to his hammock, he mentally reviewed his position, the difficulties of which had not been lessened by the unexpected arrival of the Dutch ship.

It had never been the way of Holland to go out of her course to be friendly. The commandant could not forget that she had colonised large tracts of country further south; he knew that, like England, she aspired to extend her influence beyond the seas; and what more probable than that, snatching at the opportunity afforded by this alliance, her government should have commissioned Van Vuren to spy out the land and report upon its possibilities?

Already sufficient dangers threatened the fortress. Disquieting rumours had reached Roussilac of late. The Indians, it was said, were growing more restless and bolder because they had discovered the weakness

of the French. It was certain that a band of five Englishmen had been seen in the district by Gaudriole, and these were probably the precursors of more formidable numbers. The islanders, Roussilac knew, had a knack of appearing when least expected; and Agincourt had long since shown the world that they were never so formidable as when few in numbers, short of supplies, and worn after heavy marching. It was this fear which had induced the commandant to adopt the plan of retiring to the ship each night, so that, whatever might befall his men upon the mainland, he at least would be in a position of comparative safety.

By this it will be perceived that Roussilac was not altogether of that stuff of which heroes are made. Nor was he a man of exceptional ability. He had fought his way up to his present post of responsibility with the aid of fortune and a natural capacity for obeying orders, although, while he had been ascending, he preferred to forget his Norman parents and connections, merely because they happened to be poor and humble folk. His mother's brother and her husband, the latter driven out of France for heresy, were living upon a small holding, little more than a day's journey from the fortress; Jean-Marie Labroquerie, their only son, had lately joined the ranks of his small army; but the commandant was too proud, or perhaps too cowardly, to acknowledge these kinsfolk, and in his heart he found the hope that Madame Labroquerie, his aunt, a woman of bitter memories, with a sharp tongue and a passionate nature, would never seek to reach the fortress and shame him before his men. The

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selfish spirit of Richelieu was working on in Arnaud de Roussilac, as indeed it worked through the character of almost all the creatures of the Cardinal.

Still perplexed by the problems of his position, the commandant recited the prayers without which no soldier of the age could have deemed himself safe from the perils of the night, placed his sword ready to his hand, and retired to his hammock, although darkness had scarcely settled over the land. In a few minutes he was asleep.

These early slumbers were rudely broken by a heavy hand which seized and shook him by the shoulder. The glare of a torch hurt his eyes, when he opened them to discover the tanned features of D'Archand, the master of the ship, between the folds of the netting spread to exclude the ever-hostile insects.

"An attack," muttered Roussilac, in the first moment of consciousness. "A plague upon these English."

"Hasten!" cried D'Archand. "The fortress is in an uproar. La Salle has insulted the Dutch master, and a duel is imminent."

At that Roussilac awoke fully, and, stretching out his arm, drew the square port-hole open, admitting the sound of the tidewater under the ship's counter, and beyond, a sharp murmur of excited voices. Craning his neck, he discovered an intermittent flashing of lights along the pathway under the cliff.

"Now may the saints help me!" the commandant exclaimed, as he felt for his cloak. "I have no shadow of power over these priests. More willingly would I oppress a witch than cross a Church-

man. Magic can only rot a man's body, but ex-communication touches his soul. What is the cause of this quarrel?"

"I know not," answered D'Archand. "But duelling has been forbidden altogether——"

"By Church and State alike," the commandant interrupted testily. "The Cardinal might as well forbid the plague to strike his army. When the Church itself breaks the law, how is the head of the army to act?"

The captains speedily left the ship, ascended the winding path, and entered the street of fishermen.

All the inhabitants appeared to be gathered together upon the low ground, to witness the by no means unprecedented spectacle of a duel between priest and layman. They stood six deep under the cliff, with as many more upon the side of the river; old and young, women in soiled stiff caps, ragged settlers, and soldiers in faded accoutrements side by side. A ring of men, holding spluttering pine torches, or oil lanterns, the flames of which smoked and flickered up and down the horn sides, enclosed an open space where two shadowy figures swayed almost noiselessly, facing one another, each right arm directing a rapier which flashed continually in the confused lights.

"I would the challenger were any other than the Abbé La Salle," muttered Roussillac. "He would cut off my hopes of Heaven as readily as he shall presently run through your Du'eman."

"There is no finer swordsman in the new world than the abbé," whispered D'Archand in his ear.

"If Van Vuren be killed, the Cardinal shall account

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you responsible, and I too shall not escape blame. This new alliance may not hold if the deed be known in Paris."

Roussilac started forward, and scattered the people, who were too excited to recognise him.

"Put up your swords!" he shouted. "I charge you, sir priest, in the King's name to cease fighting with this man, who is my guest and our common ally."

"Corpus Domini!" cried Laroche, staggering towards the commandant, his big face flushed with excitement and liquor. "Order the wind to cease, commandant, or yon river to stop its flow. Attempt to restrain La Salle when his blood is hot! Know you, sir, this is an affair of honour."

"It is not you who shall suffer from the breaking of the law, sir priest," protested the representative. "By St. Gris! a master-stroke!" he exclaimed, unable altogether to suppress his soldierly instincts.

La Salle, foreseeing an interruption, had closed with his enemy in a vigorous skirmish of rapid and clever feints, culminating in a stroke the admirable technique of which had wrung an involuntary testimony from the commandant. Van Vuren escaped by a side movement, which to the onlookers partook of the nature of a lucky accident. But there was a smear of blood upon the priest's rapier when he pressed again to the attack.

"Yon Dutchman shall be the only sufferer," said Laroche. "Only bloodshed can satisfy the Abbé La Salle. Nature must run her course. There stands a scar upon my brother's back, made by this Van

Vuren's sword four years ago at the corner of a dark turning in Avignon. What was the cause? Well, commandant, a woman they say is always the cause; but my friend is, like myself, a priest, and therefore above suspicion so far as women are concerned. Dutchmen have hard heads and slow brains. It is also said of them that if they can run from an enemy with honour they will run. My brother was one night returning home after administering at a sick bed; beside a corner he heard a step, and, before he could turn, a sword point went in his back. The Dutchman's honour was satisfied. He ran, but he was marked as he escaped. In Avignon during those days Van Vuren was known by another, and less honourable, name. But the devil may wear a halo and remain the devil."

While the abbé spoke, some heavy clouds which had gathered over the heights, darkening the night, began to discharge themselves in rain, and presently lashed in so heavy a torrent that the torches were extinguished, and the men holding the lanterns had much difficulty to maintain the feeble flames. La Salle, with his back to the storm, drove the Hollander before him through the hissing rain, the people falling away as the duellists advanced, their blades gleaming and grating through the silvery lines of water. A muffled shout went up. Van Vuren had been palpably hit upon the shoulder. La Salle smiled grimly and still pressed on, lunging repeatedly over the captain's guard, taking every risk of a wound as he hastened to make his victory sure.

Roussillac cleared the road, the people only obey-

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ing when the soldiers prepared to enforce their officer's order.

"Gentlemen," cried the commandant, advancing, with an imprecation upon the rain, "drop your swords, I pray of you."

"The devil seize you!" shouted La Salle, throwing out his left arm. "His point was not an inch from me."

"Put up your swords," repeated Roussillac, boldly disregarding the remonstrance. "Sir priest, it is the will of the Cardinal."

These were potent words, and for one moment the abbé hesitated. He lowered his point with an angry side glance upon his interrupter, and the affair would then have finished had not a dark figure stepped out from the shadow under the cliff, and thrown itself into position with the muffled warning, "En garde!"

"Ah, dog!" cried La Salle, starting forward through the rain with scarcely a ray of light between him and his adversary.

When a line of lightning broke the sky, an exclamation burst from his lips and his bold cheek blanched. During that momentary illumination La Salle beheld his enemy clearly. He saw a mean man clad in a suit of faded red with torn and stained ruffles; his hair gathered behind and tied with a piece of grass; his hat broken out of shape and adorned sadly with half a plume. And when Laroche held up a lantern, the fighting priest saw further that what he had taken for a negroid skin was merely a mask which covered the stranger's face, slit with holes for the eyes and mouth.

"This," muttered La Salle, cold with terror as

he warded off an attack which was far more aggressive than that of Van Vuren, "this is the work of Satan."

Roussilac touched D'Archand, pointing along the path which bent down to the river, and whispered, "Wait for the lightning."

When the flash passed, the master saw the big figure of the Dutchman hurrying to reach his ship, his sword still drawn in his hand.

"Then, who is this?" exclaimed D'Archand, with a frightened oath, indicating through the beating rain the man behind the mask.

Roussilac signed himself, and said nothing.

Laroche hurried up, his big face streaming, the lantern shaking in his hands like a will-o'-the-wisp, his attitude grotesque with terror.

"What witchcraft is here?" he shouted. "See you how this Dutchman has changed body and appearance as well as name?"

"Van Vuren is not here," said Roussilac gravely. "He ran when the abbé lowered his sword; and so soon as he had gone—nay, before—yonder figure stepped out of the darkness under the cliff and challenged La Salle. You see he has covered his face. It is the mad Englishman who fights for the love of fighting. And the English cover the earth like flies."

"I shall stiffen his arm, be he heretic or devil," said the stout priest; and he went and stood near the duellists, and, boldly facing the stranger, cursed him prolifically in the name of Holy Church and the King of Rome.

The stranger did not turn, and only acknowledged

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the anathemas by a perfectly distinct laugh which issued weirdly from the mask.

No man had ever called La Salle's bravery in question. Facing an enemy, who had started as it were from the rocks before him in the rain and the lightning, he met the resolute attack and parried every lunge. In truth, the priest was a fine swordsman; but his resource in skirmish and detail was here taxed to the uttermost. All he could do at his best was to hold out the short sword, which flashed in and out of the rain, controlled by a wrist of steel and an iron arm. The masked man gave forth no sound of hard breathing. He was a master of swordcraft, and La Salle knew that he had met his match. Here was no nervous Dutchman to be trifled with; no hectoring soldier with a hearty oath and bluff swagger. La Salle sweated, and his breath came pricking in hot gasps, and a cold thrill trickled along his back when he allowed himself to wonder who the enemy might be.

The stranger guarded against treachery, hugging the cliff lest anyone with hostile intentions might pass behind and reach his back. Had he moved out, he would assuredly have beaten down the abbé's defence; as it was, the latter was acting upon the defensive, and doing so with much difficulty.

The rain stopped on an instant. As suddenly the clouds fell back to admit the light; and the rugged shadows of the rocks traced fantastic shapes along the Rue des Pêcheurs.

The strained voice of Laroche broke the stillness.

"A touch!"

"Liar!" shouted back the hard-driven but proud

priest, although he felt warm blood oozing between his fingers.

The masked man feared the light which followed the sweeping away of the storm clouds. He bestirred himself, feinted with amazing rapidity within and without the pass, then his limber wrist stiffened for the second, and his point darted in like a poisonous snake over the hilt and wounded La Salle upon the muscle of the sword-arm.

"A touch!" shouted the captains together, both too excited to have any thought for the law.

"An accident," gasped the proud priest. "A misfortune."

"Well, here's a touch!" called a deep English voice; and as the challenger made his nationality known he lunged beneath the abbé's blade, thrusting out until the blood spurted upward in a jet.

"Yes, yes. A touch—I confess," panted La Salle; and he staggered back, crossed his legs, and fell heavily.

"By St. Michael!" shouted the fat Laroche, furiously pulling out his sword and reaching towards the shadow under the cliff. "You shall pay, assassin, for this."

The mysterious stranger chuckled, disarmed Laroche in a moment, scratching the stout abbé's wrist with his point, and before the two officers and the handful of soldiers could bestir themselves, he had disappeared round the bend of the Rue des Pêcheurs. Roussilac ran to the ending of the way, but found no sign of the masked man, who had vanished as mysteriously as he had arrived.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISMATION.

THE day following the duel La Salle was under the hands of the surgeon—who, in the ignorance of that age, treated his patient for loss of blood by letting yet more—and Roussilac was sending forth men with the charge to find the hiding-place of the Englishman, and to fail not at their peril. However, they did at that time fail. Not even the cunning hunchback Gaudriole had been able to discover the habitation of the mysterious swordsman who had dared to enter the fortress and openly defy its officers and men.

Even the Indian might have walked behind the scrub of tangled willow-growth over the cave-dwelling, and known nothing of it, had his eyes or his nose failed to discern the thread of wood-smoke often curling above the blackened crater of a hollow tree which had been ingeniously converted into a chimney. A grass-covered knoll made the roof of the dwelling, the entrance to which only became apparent from a stone causeway, shelving gradually between the roots of pine trees, and enclosed by massive logs which banked the eastern front of the burrow.

Upon the threshold of this rude home a brown boy was playing with a wolf-hound, while awaiting

his father's return from that daring visit to the fortress.

Around him Nature thundered like a great organ. The leaden waters of the great discharge roared where the bush made a screen which no eyes could pierce; the falls of the Ouiataniche smoked below. Spray flew above the scrub, bathing the dog's fur and the strong arms of the child. The one bayed, the other shouted, to the hard north wind that swept overhead, lashing the branches, tearing the summits of the pines, snatching the dry wisps of grass and whirling them under the clouds. The dark bush groaned. The great rocks bore their buffetings with hollow protests. Ravens croaked as they swung up and down; divers wailed from the weedy creeks. The boughs chafed, and the plumed foliage clashed together, loosening a rain of cones and showers of pine needles.

"I want to grow. I want to be strong," shouted the boy to his panting companion. "I want to wear a sword and fight. I want to be a soldier and shed blood. I want to live!"

The dog broke away barking, and rushed through the scrub. The child ran after him, and they met upon the dripping rocks, which made a natural fortification to the cave beyond.

A magnificent spectacle rolled away, as full of sound and motion as a battlefield. Well had the Indians named that place the Region of the Lost Waters. Islands heaved out of the raging expanse, small and densely covered with torn vegetation, every ridge of pine-crested rock moaning under the north wind, splintered and rough and ragged, scarred like

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the duellist's arm. About these islands the separate torrents thundered, seeking outlets for escape. There were a hundred channels, each striving to be the main, each at war with all others, each leaping white-crested down to join its rivals at the stupendous fall. Every separate discharge lifted up its voice to drown the combined clamour of its rivals.

A canoe shot the rapids between two islands, quivering like an arrow in its flight. It swept down, a mere feather upon the water, with only a shell of rough bark between its two occupants and the hereafter. The steerer, a handsome and pure-blooded woman of the Cayugas, crouched like a figure of bronze against the cross-piece, wielding her paddle with an easy carelessness which spoke of perfect confidence. By a turn of her wrist the shell of bark swept off a projecting rock; by a deft motion of her body, almost too subtle for the sight, the canoe glanced from a reef where the waves were wild; another, more determined, motion, and the fragile thing pierced a sheet of spray and swept to the shore. The child caught the shell and held fast, while the man who had conquered the fighting priest jumped nimbly to the sand.

"Brave boy, Richard," he cried. "Your mother and I looked out from yonder bend between the islands, knowing that our son would be awaiting us. Tell me now, how have you fared during our absence?"

The boy put out his lean arms, already tight with muscle, to greet his mother.

"I have been hunting by the moon," he answered. "Last night I shot a deer, and to-day

have cut it up. A portion of the meat is cooking now."

The soldier of fortune reached an arm round the boy's shoulders and drew him close. "You are a man, my Richard. You shall never know what it is to lack strength."

Night settled down. The lord of the isles left the cave, and, seating himself upon a bank, smoked a long pipe, which he had received as a gift from Shuswap, chief of the Cayugas, with whom he had allied himself by marriage. Silently he drew the smoke through the painted stem, then handed the pipe to his wife, and she smoked and passed the quaint object to her son, who smoked also with a strange expression of sternness upon his child's features.

"Was the meat good, father?" he asked, as he handed back the pipe.

"Somewhat too fresh, my son," the man answered.

"Was the deer well shot?"

"It was well done, Richard."

"It is not easy to shoot straight in the moonlight," the boy said. "But I shot no more than once. My arrow went true to the side of the neck, and Blood followed and pulled the creature down."

The great hound looked up with open mouth, and heavily flapped his tail.

The boy spoke both English and Cayuga, the former more perfectly than the latter. His father and mother spoke both languages, each having taught the other the words of a strange tongue. The woman was tall, of a type which was soon to grow

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extinct, her features as regular as those of a Greek statue, her eyes and hair a deep black, her skin a trifle darker than fawn-colour. Like all the proud daughters of the Iroquois, she knew well how to handle the axe and bow. Among her own people, in the days of maidenhood, her name had been Tuschota ; but by her English husband she was called Mary.

He, the lord of the isles, was almost mean in stature, with a lean, careworn face marked with decisive lines of character, grey-eyed and thin-lipped. His body was clad in a much mended suit of faded red, an old hat partly covered by a broken feather, with moccasins and leggings of his wife's make. A short sword swung behind him by a rough belt of buckskin, and a hunting-knife, the blade hiding in a beaded sheath, hung closely to his right hip. It was hard to tell his age ; he had the eager face of youth under the bleached hair of middle-age. His wife and only child called him Thomas or Father, as did the neighbouring Indians of the allied Iroquois tribes ; but none of them knew him by any other name, except that of Gitsa, the sun, or, as they intended to convey, " The strong one who sometimes covers his face."

" Father," young Richard exclaimed nervously, " shall you go away to-night? "

" Be silent, child," said the mother. " It is not for the young to know the father's will."

" Nay, Mary," said the grave man. " I love the lad's spirit. Let him speak his mind."

Richard came nearer and put out his hand, a flush upon his brow. He patted the hound's back,

its head, handled the frayed hem of his father's cloak, and then his brown fingers passed on to caress the hilt of the sword upon which his eyes had been fixed while his hand wandered.

"Father," he exclaimed, in a burst of boyish passion, "I want to wear a sword."

The man's grey eyes kindled as he heard this strong boy speak. Child as he was in years, the father's spirit was in him, and the father rejoiced.

"What would you do with a sword?" he said, frowning. "Would you cut your bread, or make kindling wood for the fire? Have you not your bow and arrows?"

"I can bring you down the bird flying, or the beast running. I can shoot you the salmon in the water. Now I would learn the sword, that I may go out with you, and fight with you, and—and protect you, my father."

The man did not smile; but he frowned no more.

"Son," he said, in tones that were still severe, "you are yet over young to join the brotherhood of the sword. The same is a mighty weapon, never a servant, but rather a tyrant, who shall destroy his wearer in the end. Know you that the Master of the world said once, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword'? Even as the tongue is the sword, an unruly member which no man can restrain. It answers an enemy without thought, even as the tongue throws back an angry word. It passes a death sentence lightly, even as the tongue curses an enemy's soul. It strikes a vulnerable spot in one mad moment; and when the passion sinks, then the hand fails, and the eye shall close for shame.

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Only the sword changes not, remaining cold to the eye, ready to the hand, and responsive to the first evil thought in the heart. You shall wear the sword some day, my son. Be content till then."

"I want to fight Frenchmen," the boy muttered. "Father, let me draw your sword. Let me see it flash in the moon. Let me feel its point."

The father's hand closed upon that of the boy, pressing the little palm strongly against the hilt. "Do not draw that sword, child," he said. "The virgin hand should hold a virgin blade."

He rose suddenly and disappeared along the white causeway. The mother and son were alone on the knoll, the black pines torn by the wind behind, the spray flying in front. The mother put out her well-shaped arm to the smouldering pipe, and drew at the mouthpiece, watching the excited boy over the triangular bowl. She spoke in the liquid language of the Cayugas, "Remember that you are very young, my son."

Richard turned passionately, and turned away the tobacco smoke which wreathed itself between their eyes.

"I have lived fifteen years. I am strong. See these arms! See how long they are, and mark how the muscle swells when I lift my hand. I am weary of killing fish and birds and beasts. I would kill men."

"You would be a man of blood, son?"

"Even as my father. He has taught me to hunt. But when he goes down to the great river he leaves me here. You he often takes; but I am left. He goes down to fight. I have watched him when he

cleans his sword. There is blood upon his sword. It is the blood of men."

"With whom would you fight?" said the mother, her voice reflecting the boy's passion.

"With the savage Algonquins in the far-away lands, the enemies of the Iroquois. And with the Frenchmen whom my father hates."

More the boy would have said, but at that moment the lord of the place returned with a sheathed sword and a velvet belt. The sword, a short blade like that which he himself wore, as slight almost as a whip, he tested on the ground, and in his stern manner pointed out a spot upon the summit of the knoll where the moonlight played free from shadow, saying, "Stand there."

The boy obeyed, stretching out an expectant hand.

His father gave him the virgin sword, fixing him with his stern eye, and suddenly whipped out his own blade, and exclaimed, in a voice which was meant to strike terror into the child's heart, "On guard!"

The boy did not wince, but threw up his point like an old soldier, and his face became wild when along his right arm there thrilled for the first time an indescribable strength and joy as the two blades met.

By instinct he caught the point, and parried the edge. By instinct he lunged at the vital spots, stepping forward, darting aside, falling back, never resting upon the wrong foot nor misjudging the distance. His father, who tested him so severely, smiled despite himself, and Richard saw the smile, and, confident that he could pass his father's

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guard, stepped out and took up the attack in a reckless endeavour to inflict a wound upon his teacher's arm.

The stern soldier of fortune played with the boy under the rushing north wind and the swaying light of the moon, while the mother stood near on the slope of the knoll, her eyes flashing, her nostrils distended, her bosom heaving with the passion of the sword-play. She noted how nobly the boy responded to his blood—the enduring blood of the high-bred Cayuga mingled with the fighting strain of the Englishman. She watched the sureness of his hand, the boldness of his eye. She saw how readily the use of the sword came to him, and once she sighed, because her husband had made her Christian, and she remembered the warning of the unseen God which her lord had lately repeated, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

A cry broke from her lips. Her husband's sword flashed suddenly across her vision, drew back, lowered, and fell like the falcon which had made its blow, and the point sprinkled a few drops of blood upon the bleached grass.

"Thomas," she exclaimed in her native tongue, "why have you wounded your son?"

"It is his baptism to the sword," her husband answered.

Maddened, not by the pain in his shoulder, which indeed he scarcely felt, nor by the sight of his blood flicked contemptuously at his feet, but at the indignity of the wound, the boy rushed at his father, and hit at him blindly as with a stick; and when

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the master caught and held him, and by the act reminded him that he was yet a child, he began to sob violently with rage.

"You shall pay," he flamed. "I will have your blood for mine. I will fight you again. I will kill you. I will——"

"Peace, child," interrupted his mother. "He is your father."

"Take him and see to him, Mary. I did but prick his shoulder," said the father. "So fiercely did he press upon me that I feared he might throw himself upon my point. The lesson shall teach him prudence."

"I am dishonoured — wounded," moaned Richard.

The father opened his doublet and displayed his chest, which upon both sides was marred by many a scar. Richard beheld, and blinked away his angry tears, as the passion departed from him.

"Must I too be wounded before I am a soldier?" he said.

"Ay, a hundred times," his father answered; and the boy turned away then with his former look of pride, and permitted his mother to wash and bandage the slight wound upon his shoulder.

Soon they came out together to the knoll where the silent man sat with the north wind roaring into his ears the song of battle. He looked up when they were near, and called, "Richard!"

The boy came, subdued and tired, and stood before his father.

"Kneel."

The boy obeyed. The lord of the isles fastened

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the velvet sword-belt to his son's waist, secured the coveted sword in its place, then stood, and drew out his own well-tested blade.

With it he struck the boy smartly upon the shoulder exactly over the wound, smiling when the child compressed his lips fiercely but refused to wince, and loudly called :

“ Arise, Sir Richard ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

MAKERS OF EMPIRE.

As the days passed, and Van Vuren's attitude of diffident friendliness remained unaltered, Roussilac's suspicions began to leave him; and even La Salle modified his former opinions when he again walked abroad and discovered that out of the seventy-five fighting men who made up the military complement of the Dutch man-of-war, no less than thirty had been sent out upon a hunting expedition in the western forests. These, and other circumstances, tended to impress the minds of the French officers that their ally was acting in good faith; thus the commandant relaxed his vigilance, and Van Vuren was permitted to go upon his way unwatched. The Dutchman came seldom to the fortress, because he feared a second meeting with La Salle; but he frequently stole under cover of night into the forest to the north, where the Cayugas had their camp, little guessing that these visits were known, not indeed to the French, but to a company of five Englishmen, who had been thrown upon the coast to the west of the settlement of Acadie during a storm of the previous October, and had wintered in a cave among the rugged cliffs some little distance beyond the falls of Montmorenci, believing themselves to be the sole representatives of their country in all that land.

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These men—the sole survivors of an expedition which had set forth with the object of establishing a small colony in the north—wasted no time in repining over their ill-fortune, or considering the hopeless nature of their position. They engaged themselves in mastering the topography of the fortress and ascertaining the strength of its garrison; they watched the river, and noted the coming and going of each ship; they made themselves friendly with the Iroquois, and from Shuswap, the chief of the Cayugas, a man who loved the English, they obtained from time to time much information of value. It was one of their number, Jeremiah Hough the Puritan, who had followed Van Vuren to the Indian camp-fire; and when he discovered that the Dutchman was indeed faithless to his allies and was endeavouring to stir up the Iroquois to strike a blow against the French position, he returned with the tidings to his comrades, and the little council of five sat for a long night and discussed this Dutch policy with the cool shrewdness of their race.

As a result of their debate, one of the little band was deputed each night to lie concealed upon the shore and watch the Dutch ship. Simon Penfold, the leader, a spare, grey man of two score years and ten, but hard and hale as any oak in his home meadows, played spy on the first night; Jesse Woodfield, a yeoman scarce thirty years of age, did duty on the second, and handsome young Geoffrey Viner, the boy of the party, beloved by his comrades for the sake of his long fair hair and comely face, kept watch on the third. On

the fourth night the task devolved upon George Flower, a middle-aged, sad-featured man, the captain's faithful friend since the days of boyhood; and the next night found stern Hough the Puritan lying among the willows above the shingle, with his cold eyes fixed upon a single star of light which marked the position of the Dutch ship.

These five men, who made up the little company of Englishmen venturing into the French colony, were yeomen of Berks, farmers of the valleys and fields watered by the Thames, men of good repute, who had been driven to leave their native shore and seek another home in the wide new world through the oppression of the agents of the greedy English king.

The man who had discovered Van Vuren's plans had indeed delayed his flight too long. Scarred and lined as were the faces of Flower and Penfold, their features had at least escaped the terrible mutilation which had been inflicted upon Hough as an outward and visible sign of the royal displeasure. His ears had been cropped close to the skull, his nostrils slit, his cheeks branded, as a penalty for having stoutly refused to supply any portion of the necessities of King Charles, according to the demand of the most honourable Court of Star Chamber. The strong black hair which spread thickly over the Puritan's face, yet without hiding the trail of the branding iron and the prunings of the executioner's knife, added a terrible touch to his dehumanised appearance.

It was on the fifth night after the watch had been appointed that Van Vuren played for his big

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stake. From a safe shelter among the willows, Hough observed a small fire upon the shore, and two men, one of whom appeared to be a native, watching beside the flames. Presently he heard a voice hailing softly from the darkness which overhung the river, and soon a black hulk loomed beside the shore.

Hough counted six men as they disembarked one by one, he saw the boat drawn up, and the beacon fire extinguished. That fire was still hissing under the water which had been thrown upon it when the Puritan crawled out of the thicket of red willow, and stood, leaning forward, listening attentively. When the sound of footfalls died away, he scaled the cliff behind, ran over the flat to the little river of Montmorenci, which was flecked with foam and shivering as it neared it. A straight plunge, pulled a canoe from beneath the oars, and shot across that dangerous passage as though it had been no whit more formidable than some sluggish reach of his native Thames. Had he dropped his paddle, death would have been inevitable; had he allowed himself to drift beyond a certain point the current would have dragged him down to the white bar of foam which marked a phosphorescent line across the darkness beyond.

Plunging again into the forest, he proceeded in the same headlong fashion, bearing to the right, always descending, until he struck a path through the interlacing trees, and finally reached rock-land and a cave cunningly concealed behind a screen of willow.

He whistled softly, and when his signal was answered pushed inward, drawing away a sheet of can-

vas which had been stretched across the entry to imprison more effectually the light. A fire burnt within, the smoke escaping from a shaft two hundred feet above; and round this fire were grouped his four companions, who started up with eager faces when the Puritan made his entry.

"Good news, I wot," cried old Penfold. "'Tis spoken already by your eyes, friend Hough."

"My eyes lie not," the Puritan answered. "Comrades, the Dutch have shown their hand. If we strike at once we shall assuredly kill their plan, and may perchance seize their leader."

In a few words he disclosed what he had seen.

"They go to hold council with the sachems," said Penfold, adding thoughtfully, "There will be no light until the dawn."

"Let us lie in wait for them beside their boat," the Puritan advised.

"Nay, let us fall upon them in the forest," cried Woodfield.

"Not so," answered the leader. "A man cannot use his sword for the bush and the splintered growth from the pines."

"An Iroquois guide will accompany them," said Flower.

"The boat! the boat!" shouted young Viner. "That is the place."

"Peace, lads," cried Penfold, stroking his beard. "Let us discuss with reason. Why has this Dutch vessel made her way up the river? Roussillac would tell us that she has come to strengthen the hands of the French. Is it so? I trow not. It has ever been the policy of the Dutch to dissemble. Holland in-

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tends to keep the English from this coast if she may. Surely she desires also to drive out the French, in order that she may make herself mistress of the North American land. She is eager to make colonies, and she knows full well that the fortress may easily be defended once it be captured."

"She is, then, a privateer," exclaimed Hough.

"Not so. She is commissioned by the Government of the Netherlands to seize North America. The French are only a handful here. England has no fleet. Now is the crafty Dutchman's opportunity. Look upon this, my lads."

Penfold pulled a flaming stick from the fire and walked across the cave. He stopped where the side sloped as smoothly as a wall, and held the torch above his head, pointing to a map of the American colonies traced upon the wall of silica by charcoal. The design was roughly and incorrectly made; rivers were placed where mountains should have shown, and the scale was entirely inaccurate; but politically it was correct.

"See!" cried the leader, passing a finger through Chesapeake Bay, and laying his hand lovingly upon the province of Virginia. "There lies the fairest of England's colonies. Here, mark you, flows the Potomac, and here to the north behold the province of Maryland. What country lies back in the beyond we do not know, because the Mohawks are masters there; but pass north along the coast and we reach New England, the provinces of Connecticut and Massachusetts, with the king's towns of Boston and Plymouth. Between lie our enemies."

He passed his fingers across the words written on the wall, "New Netherlands," while the four men murmured behind.

"Did the Hollanders acquire their colonies in fair fight?" demanded Penfold, returning to the fire.

He flung down the brand, and as the sparks showered upward he went on, "I say it was through deceit. During the glorious reign of our Elizabeth, of blessed memory, our men of Devon, our Grenville, our Drake, our Hawkins smoked out the Spaniards, and wrested these colonies of the new world from the King of Spain in fair fight. Fair do I say? Ay, surely one tight English ship was ever a match for three popish galleons. But mark you how the jackals followed the lion, even as travellers from the Indies tell us they follow to take of that which the lion shall leave. Where the land was free, where there was no tyranny of the church to dread, mark you how the Dutch jackals crept in, to find a home and found a colony under the protection of the golden lions of England."

"Come, old Simon," broke in Woodfield. "Enough of talk."

"Ay, ay. Put out the fire, my lads. Rub out yon map. We have a plan which, with God's help, shall perchance furnish us with better quarters than this poor hole in the rock."

Young Geoffrey stepped back, spat upon the white wall where the words "New Netherlands" appeared, and obliterated the Dutch colonies with the flat of his hand.

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“ Let the map now stand ! ” he cried, and the others gathered round the boy whom they loved, clashing their swords, and taking courage from the thoughtless prophecy which was in God’s good time to be fulfilled.

Then the Englishmen went on their way through the dark night.

CHAPTER V.

DOUBLE DEALING.

THE Dutch master had played his game of duplicity with no little skill. His arrogant attitude towards the head men of the fortress, his outspoken hatred for the wild north land and its uncivilised inhabitants, his outward indolence and distaste for fighting, were all subtle moves towards the object he had in view. The culminating stroke of practically disarming his ship by sending out thirty of his best men upon a hunting expedition was, he considered, a veritable inspiration of genius. The plan had indeed succeeded in its purpose of hoodwinking the French, and Van Vuren was satisfied, because he knew nothing of the venturers who had discovered his plans and were preparing to strike a blow against him for the glory of their country and themselves.

Six men were admitted into their leader's confidence, and five of these only at the last hour. Everything seemed to favour the enterprise. The night which had been chosen for the council between Van Vuren and the headmen of the Iroquois was very dark. No sound came from the sleeping fortress; not a light was showing upon the French ship. The usual sentries were posted, but the darkness was too impenetrable for the keenest sight to carry more than a few yards. Van Vuren stepped to the side of his ship,

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listened intently for some minutes, and when the silence remained unbroken whispered an order, and the five picked men clambered down a ladder and guided their feet into a boat which rode alongside. The master followed, the boat was pushed off, and floating down stream swung rapidly round the bend.

"To your oars," muttered Van Vuren.

The black water began to trickle gleefully under the bows, the rowers dropping their blades cautiously and lifting them high to avoid a splash. Soon a spark of light broke out upon the shore, at no great distance from the falls of Montmorenci, where the river of that name discharges into the mightier stream. Swinging the tiller round, Van Vuren aimed the boat towards that light.

Beside the fire awaited them a stout Dutchman, who had lived in New Netherlands among the Indians on the banks of the Schuylkill and there had learnt the language, and with him was an Indian squatting upon his haunches. The latter was naked to the waist; a round beaver cap came low over his forehead, and long hair streamed down his cheeks. His body shone like polished mahogany as the firelight played across it. He rose when Van Vuren approached, and remarked upon the exceeding blackness of the night, and the stout Dutchman answered in the native tongue, "It is well."

After drawing their boat up the shore and putting out the fire, the men listened again for any sounds of hostile movements, and when Van Vuren was reassured as to their safety the party set off along an imperceptible trail, following their Cayuga guide, who strode rapidly towards the cover of the forest.

At the end of an hour's march they drew near the camp and perceived the glow of the council fire. The boles of the trees became ruddy, and they smelt the acrid smoke which curled upward in wreaths to find an outlet through the solid-looking roof of foliage. There was no vegetation below. Splintered stumps projected stiffly from the conifers; sometimes a fallen trunk lay across the way; the peaty ground was soft with pine needles. A fox barked monotonously in the distance. Occasionally a gust of wind passed with a sigh and a gentle straining at the mast-like firs.

The party stepped into a clearing, and Van Vuren halted nervously, tightening the sash which secured his doublet at the waist. Nine men appeared before him, seated under a protection of skins stretched tightly across a framework of boughs, the whole forming a lean-to which might readily be moved, either to break the force of the wind or to afford shelter from rain. The men squatted cross-legged, the majority naked to the waist and shining with fish-oil, a few wrapped in blankets, the heads of all covered with fur caps adorned with pieces of white metal or black feathers. Only one man was painted, and he showed nothing more than a triangular patch of red upon his forehead, the apex of the triangle making a line with the bridge of his nose. This man was smoking, and did not put down his pipe when the strangers arrived. The smoking was indeed a compliment, being the symbolic pipe of peace.

The nine were sachems of the great Iroquois tribes who in combination held the north of the continent: the Cayugas, Oneidas, Mohawks, Onon-

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dagas, and Benacas. The smoker was Shuswap, headman of the Cayugas, father of Onawa and Tuschota, and the chief doctor, one who professed to understand the language of the beasts, and knew how to hold communion with the dead. He looked up, drawing the stem of his pipe from his thin lips, and spoke :

"Do the white men, who come to us from the world where the sun never shines, speak to us now words of peace or of war?"

Van Vuren moved awkwardly when he saw the grave hairless faces peering at him through the hot vapour of the fire. At that moment the fat sailor from New Netherlands reached the clearing, panting like a dog. He presently interpreted the question, and his leader answered: "Tell the chief that we come from a world where the days are long, and where the same sun that warms this country shines from morn till night."

"That were waste of breath," muttered the seaman, who had none to spare, and he said instead to the council of nine: "The white chief has come in peace to seek the aid of the sun's children that he may overthrow his enemies."

"A people have taken my children to be their servants," said Shuswap. "That people armed the enemies of my race against me. Is the white man friendly with that people?"

"The French of whom the great sachem speaks are my enemies also," replied Van Vuren through the interpreter. "I would drive them from the land, and dwell here in peace beside my allies the great tribes of the Iroquois."

The crafty Dutchman reflected that, when the flag of the Netherlands waved over the heights, it would be easy to hold the Indians in the forest with a warship upon the St. Lawrence and a few cannon frowning from the cliff.

"The white man has called us into council," went on Shuswap. "What does he ask of us?"

At that the Hollander played his hand boldly.

"I ask you to send your fighting-men against the French when I give the signal. I will sink the provision ship which lies upon the river, while your men sweep over the heights and capture the fortress. So shall you be avenged upon your enemies, the men who armed the Algonquins against you."

"It is well said," answered the council of nine.

"What signal will you give, that we may know when to make our attack?" said Shuswap.

"A raft of fire floating down the river."

The headman removed his eyes from the Dutchman and turned to consult his colleagues. They conferred for some minutes, without passion, without animation, apparently with no feeling of interest. Their faces were set, and they spoke with only faint motions of their lips.

"We will bring our children," said the old sachem at last. "When the fire is seen along the Father of Waters we shall make ourselves ready."

He bent forward, raised a short stick from the centre of the council fire, and held it out in his brown fingers, then dashed the brand suddenly upon the ground, and dreamily watched the upward flight of sparks.

"Our enemies fly before us," he muttered.

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"The sparks fly outward," said the sachem of the Oneidas.

"The Frenchmen shall not be able to stand before the children of the sun," they muttered with one voice.

The pipe was passed round with terrible solemnity, every Indian and Dutchman drawing once at the stem and handing it to his neighbour, and then the Hollanders left the clearing to return, well satisfied with their night's work.

It wanted yet three hours to the first breaking of the dawn, and the night was as dark as ever when the seven men came out upon the rocks, where they could hear the faint whisper of the river. There the Indian guide left them, and the Dutchmen, flushed with success, laughed and talked loudly, knowing that they were separated from the hearing of the French settlement by more than a mile of rock and bush. Advancing in single file, they came to the thicket of willow beside which they had left their boat.

"Is all well?" called Van Vuren, who walked at the end of the line.

As he spoke there fell a storm out of the night; a thunder of voices; the lightning of flashing swords; a rush of dark bodies around the boat. In the thick darkness all became confusion on the side of the attacked.

"English!" shouted Van Vuren; and, as the long body of the Puritan descended upon him, the master turned and fled, without honour, but with a whole skin. Only the stout seaman shared his leader's privilege of a run for his life, but him the far-striding

legs of Hough pursued, covering two feet to the Dutchman's one. The wretch sweated and groaned as he flung out his aching legs, his great body heaving and staggering as cold as ice. He swore and prayed to God in one breath. He promised a life of service to the Deity, a treasure in the Indies to the pursuer; but prayer and promise availed him little. The mutilated man pressed upon him, and it was only the almost tangible darkness which prolonged his life for a few more agonised seconds. Then Hough bounded within reach, lunged fairly, pressing home when he felt flesh, and the fat Dutchman emitted a violent yell, and his big carcase rolled upon the rocks, his head settled, his mouth grinned spasmodically, his limbs twitched, and then he lay at ease, staring more blindly than ever into the night. Out of the six conspirators who had set forth that night, Van Vuren was the only man to escape with his life.

"Cast me these bodies into the river," said Penfold, wiping his sword. "But, stay. It were a pity to waste so much good clothing. Strip them first, lads. Naked they came into the world, and naked let them go out."

The bodies were denuded of their clothes and weapons. Five splashes shivered the face of the river, and then the Englishmen laid hands upon the boat and drew her down to the water. But an idea had occurred to Penfold, and he called a halt.

"We have the current to row against, and the night may break before we reach the ship," he said. "Let us disguise ourselves, so that French and Dutch alike may regard us as friends in the dimness of the morning. Here are five suits of Dutch clothing.

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There are five of us. We shall fight the easier in such loose-fitting trunks."

"Methinks they that fear the Lord have no need to adopt a cunning device," protested the Puritan.

"What know we about the ways of the Lord?" said his leader. "Does the Lord grant the victory to him who runs? Does He not rather send him a sword into his coward's back? The Lord, I tell you, helps that man who is the most subtle in devising schemes through which he may overthrow his enemies. A murrain on these garments! I shall be as a child when he has put on his father's trappings for the bravery of the show."

Already a grey-dark mist spread along the river where the night clouds were dissolving at the first light touch of the fingers of the day. The adventurers had but an hour for their project before the coming of the first light.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INTRODUCTION TO A FIGHT.

UPON the fore-deck of the Dutch ship two sailors were chatting idly beside a lantern's shaded light. They had tramped up and down, performing their duty in a listless fashion, until the general silence had convinced them that the officer in charge was asleep below. The determination to take their ease, which they thereupon arrived at, became strengthened by their belief that the vessel could not have been safer had she been at anchor-hold in the Zuyder Zee.

"Yon French ship has no sentries, I warrant," said Jan Hoevendend, the younger of the two. "What use, when a man may hardly see his hand when 'tis held in front of him? Your Indian does not attack by water, as Roussilac well knows. Neither shall he attack in such a darkness, unless hard put to it."

"'Tis a scheme of the master to deprive us of our hard-earned sleep," grumbled James Oog. "Come, comrade, let us rest here and smoke. Here is a parcel of tobacco which I dried yesterday in the sun."

The two sailors filled their pipes, lighted the tobacco at the poop lantern, and settled themselves aft speedily to forget their responsibilities. There was not a sound, except the hum of flies and the swirl of the river. There was nothing to be seen, beyond the gloomy masts and spectral rigging. The atmosphere remained still and close.

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"This is but a poor country, Jan," observed the older man, after a few contented puffs at his huge pipe. "There be no treasure of gold or silver buried here."

"Nought but forest and rock, with a biting wind o' nights," replied Hoevenden. "'Tis a cold climate. The Indians say this river is thick with ice for a full half of the year."

"I wish for none of that. Give me the south. Hast ever been in Florida?"

"Nay. Is that land as fruitful as men say?"

"It knows no winter, and even in the midst of the year the heat is never so great that a man may not endure to work. The soil is so rich that grain dropped upon the ground shall spring into harvest in a month. Sugar and fruit grow there, and much timber for building. There is also game for the pot, and furs for a man's back."

"There are pestilent beasts, they tell me," Hoevenden grumbled.

"Well, man, there was never a paradise without serpents. True there are mighty reptiles, twenty feet in length, within the rivers, and monstrous scorpions upon land. But what of it? There are perils upon every shore. A man may sit out at night under a big moon, beside trees covered with white or pink blooms, every bloom as great as his head and smelling like wine, and he may listen to the Tritons singing as they splash through the sea, and watch the mermaids—passing fair they say who have seen them—lying upon the rocks, wringing salt water from their hair. 'Tis a wondrous shore. I would rather own an acre of it than be master of all this country of cold forest where there is neither fruit nor flower."

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"The fog arises yonder," said Hoevenden, pointing down the river.

The grey mass which he indicated ascended rapidly and drenched the deck with dew. There was as yet no light, but a heavy shadow had taken the place of the intense blackness, and the river was visible as it carried its current to the gulf. The two men rose suddenly, and hid their pipes when they heard the rattle of oars and splash of water.

"Shall be found at our duty," said Oog, with a husky laugh, and his fellow-seaman chuckled with him.

A boat was making rapid progress against the stream, Penfold, with an eye upon the fog and his right hand on the tiller, encouraging the rowers. The muscles sprang out from their arms, the sweat flowed from their faces, despite the rawness of the air. Hough's mutilated countenance throbbed terribly beneath his efforts. The ship started suddenly out of the mist, and Penfold called softly, "Easy, lads. Spare yourselves now, for we have soon to fight." But immediately the men stopped rowing, the current dragged the boat down.

"The use of the sword will be as child's play after pulling against this stream," gasped Hough.

Again the men bent their backs, and the boat suddenly made way. Behind them the morning was breaking rapidly, the fog gathered in whiter folds, and some flickering bars of grey light crossed the track of the river.

"They must not see our faces nor hear us speak," Penfold muttered. Then he whispered sharply, "Heaven be thanked! A ladder hangs at her stern."

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He drew the borrowed plume over his eyes, and lowered his head because he was facing the ship. His comrades gave way, driving the heavy boat upward with great strokes of the clumsy oars, until Penfold muttered softly, "Easy now."

The two sentries were looking down from above; but they perceived nothing of a suspicious nature, chiefly because they had no cause to fear the coming of the enemy.

Young Viner was the first to leave the boat, but Penfold was hard after him. They scrambled up the ladder, while the others secured the boat to the steps.

"Five men!" exclaimed Hoevendend, peering through the perplexing light. "Where is the sixth? Masters, where is the commander?"

"Here!" muttered an English voice, and the sentry fell forward with Penfold's sword through him. Oog opened his mouth to cry "Treachery!" but all the sound that issued therefrom was a death gasp, as Viner finished his career with a pretty stroke which effectually deprived the Dutchman of his hoped-for heritage in the south.

"A fair beginning," said Penfold, peering forward at the big cabins which gave the ship a curiously humped shape. "Now to smoke out the hornets. If we are mastered by numbers, we may yet save ourselves by swimming to the shore. All silent yet. But see—a gun!"

He rammed his sword up the muzzle-breach " 'Tis loaded. Fetch me yonder lantern."

Hough brought the lantern from the poop; but hardly had he done so when a head came out from one of the cabin windows, and a pair of frightened

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eyes swept their faces. In a moment, as it seemed, the ship was in an uproar.

"Now may God deafen the Frenchmen," prayed Penfold, as he swung the brass gun round and pointed its muzzle at the cabin door.

Viner and Woodfield were fastening down the hatches, while Hough ran forward, taking his life in his hands, and severed the cable. The ship quivered, shook herself like a dog aroused from sleep, and very slowly answered the downward pull of the stream.

But before the Puritan could return the cabin door burst open and the enemy swarmed forth. Hough dropped the first in his shirt, parried a blow from the second, turned and ran back, while old Penfold opened the lantern and brought the flame down to the portfire.

There was light now over the St. Lawrence under masses of wet cloud. An Indian canoe was flying over the water like a bird, urged by two pair of arms paddling furiously. She caught the floating ship, and as she made fast to the side of the steps the gun roared overhead, and after it an English cheer shook the mist.

"Keep to my side," said the man in the canoe. "Forget not that pass under the hilt I taught you." Having thus spoken he bounded up the ladder.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHT.

ALTHOUGH the majority of the thirty-six Dutchmen left aboard had been secured below hatches, those on deck were sufficient to make the odds heavy against the Englishmen. The unanticipated arrival of the lord of the isles and his son—who had been returning from their hunting ground higher up the river, when their ears were startled through the morning mist by the sound of English voices—brought up the attacking strength to the fortunate number of seven; but the new-comers were not even observed by the five adventurers during the excitement of the opening stage of that struggle in the fog.

That incautious cheer, which followed the noise of the gun, was defiant rather than triumphant. In spite of Penfold's careful aim the ball had merely crashed across deck and plunged through the cabin windows. A couple of hurriedly aimed shots came back in angry reply, but one passed high, the other low, resulting in a wrecked plank in the deck and the loss of a portion of rigging. The bark of seventeenth-century cannon was far more formidable than its bite.

"Have at them, my lads. Drive them over the side," thundered Penfold; and he rushed forward to clear the deck at the head of his gallant few.

Before the conflicting parties could meet, three Dutchmen, deceived by the tumultuous English cheer,

had gone over the side to swim for shore. These men believed that at least a boatload of armed men had taken them by surprise, and they but obeyed the instinct which in certain temperaments recommends prudence in the form of flight.

"We stand too close together," rang out Penfold's voice. "Friend Woodfield, I had your elbow twice into my side. Separate a little, but let us keep in line."

"One rush forward—a strong rush to the cabins," shouted Hough. The five swords darted through the fog, and every point came back reddened.

Then they broke into a run, hoping thus to sweep the deck, but their weakness had by this time become evident to the defenders, who in their turn pressed forward, conquering by sheer weight of numbers. Each of the adventurers sought shelter for his back, a mast or bulwark, and each was driven to fight independently. Three men rushed upon Penfold and pressed him sore. The Englishman cut at the head of the foremost, but while his arm was uplifted the others took the advantage offered and ran in under his guard. Penfold drew his dagger and beat at them with his left hand. The second Dutchman scratched him deeply along the side. The third caught and held his left wrist, and shortened his rapier to run the Englishman through the heart. Penfold saw death before him, but only called grimly, "Fair play, ye dogs, fair play!"

The sword was dashed from his hand. He pressed back to avoid the plunge of the shortened blade, but the Hollanders had him at their mercy. Penfold prepared to make a last effort to break aside, when

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the foe who threatened him started rigid with a gasp of pain, and the leader of the adventurers saw the point of a sword dart fearfully from the Dutchman's chest. Then the man fell forward spitted from behind, and with him another of the soldiers, while the third of Penfold's assailants splashed heavily into the St. Lawrence.

The man who had saved the leader's life went on his way fighting with magnificent confidence in the strength of his right arm, and beside him went the boy, fighting with all his father's fervour, his brown face pale with passion, his little brown hands already oozing blood, and his short sword from hilt to point all bloody too.

"Angels or devils," gasped Flower, who was bleeding heavily from a wound in the thigh, "they fight upon our side."

"At them again," cried Woodfield. "After the brave stranger."

"He takes too much upon him. I am leader here," grumbled old Penfold unthankfully.

The valour of the stranger turned the scale. None of the Dutch could stand before that terrible blade. They gave way, were hunted back to the cabins, and there brought to bay.

"Yield you, sirs!" called Penfold.

Seeing that they had done sufficient for honour, the men yielded, gave up their weapons, and sought permission to finish their dressing. Before this request could be granted, a deep voice exclaimed:

"You grow careless, my masters. Know you not that a bird cannot fly unless she has wings to carry her?"

It was the stranger who issued this caution as he pointed with his sword over the stern.

The ship had drifted some eighty yards from her moorings, her keel grating more than once upon a drift of mud. She had remained close to the bank, out of reach of the strong central current, and now lay almost motionless, because she had reached the slack water where the river commenced its eastward bend. Behind her lay the fortress, already vested in the golden light of the morning. Between, where the white mist was stealing upward, came sailing a great hulk, and above the vapour could be seen the flag of France crushing its golden lilies against the topmast. At intervals came the indistinct murmur of voices, the flash of hurried sparks dropped upon touchwood, the rattle of cannon balls, the ramming home of charges down slim-waisted guns.

"Fool that I am!" exclaimed Penfold. "Fool and forgetful! Up the rigging, my lads, and set the mainsail. What breeze there is blows down the river. Drive me yonder fellows up, George Flower. Do you see that they set all sails, and if they be not ready to obey hurry them with the sword point."

The sailors were driven into the rigging to plume their ship for the benefit of a victorious enemy. The canvas flapped out, the ship veered towards mid-stream, and, instantly responding to wind and current, floated to the left of the island, with the Frenchman scarce a hundred yards from her stern.

A voice came rolling out of the mist, the voice of D'Archand. "Are you attacked by Indians?" he shouted. The master had undoubtedly made out the Indian canoe floated beside the steps.

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"Let any man answer at his peril," said Penfold, glaring round upon the unarmed Dutch.

"Do we fear the French?" demanded Viner hotly. "Here are five—nay, seven—good Englishmen, for surely our stout allies here have fought as only English can——"

"There are a hundred men upon yonder ship," interrupted the leader, "men equipped with the newest weapons of Europe. It were madness to divulge our names and nation. Sir," he went on, turning to the stranger, "we are much indebted to you. Sir, you have fought like a brave man, and have helped us to overcome our enemies. What counsel do you give?"

"Answer Roussilac that Indians have come aboard, but that the crew are capable of defending themselves, if you will," the stranger replied. "So may you avoid his fire. Or with your pleasure I will undertake to answer the master myself, even as an Englishman should always answer a Frenchman."

"And how is that?" demanded Penfold.

The stranger indicated the brilliant flag flapping in the sunshine like a wounded bird trying to fly but falling back. "By defying him so long as that emblem flies," he said.

Between heavy lines of mist, waved like the canopy upon the shield of the woolcombers, the black stem and white deck of the enemy had become partly visible. Heads of watchers were peering over her side, their bodies hidden, their faces barely above the fog line. Before the cabins in front of the poop a canopy fluttered; under it a table, and upon the table six great golden poppies lifted their heads, their

ragged petals flickering under the breeze. The Englishmen saw the bare head and richly caparisoned shoulders of a tall priest, who swayed monotonously from side to side, and muttered Latin in a deep voice. The table was an altar, the poppies were candles, and the priest was La Salle reciting the inevitable morning Mass.

The better-built Dutch vessel, being easily capable of sailing a knot and a half to the Frenchman's one, drew away, her main and fore sheets swelling till they were round as the belly of some comfortable merchant of Eastcheap who had profited by a successful venture upon the Spanish Main. Very soon the voice of the militant priest became like the murmur of an overhead insect.

"Now by my soul!" cried Hough, with a quivering of his slit nostrils. "It were an everlasting disgrace to Christian men to stand thus idle and watch a priest of Baal offering sacrifice. Bid us run out the guns, captain, and drop a good Protestant cannon ball amid yonder catholic juggling. We have fought for our country this day. Let us now commit ourselves to the Lord's work, and snuff out yonder stinking candles, and end these popish blasphemies."

Penfold made no sign of hearing this appeal. He said merely, "They cram on yet more sail. But they shall not come up to us unless we are brought upon a bar, and even so they cannot pass us, because the water becomes narrow beyond. Where is friend Woodfield?"

"Guarding the prisoners at the door of the cabin and keeping an eye that they do not arm themselves."

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"Listen to the men below," said Flower. "Our caged birds become weary of confinement, and beat their wings to escape."

Hough and the lord of the isles held their eyes upon the Frenchman, who was now one hundred and fifty yards away, and almost clear of vapour. When they could see that the guns had been unshipped and were pointing over the bows, neither man was able altogether to suppress his feelings.

"The curse of God shall surely fall upon us," cried the Puritan furiously. "When summoned to work in His vineyard we turn a deaf ear to the call. Did evil come to me when I dragged with mine own hands from the reformed communion table of our parish church at Dorchester a Jesuit in disguise, and flung the dog into our little river Thame there to repent him of his former and latter sins?"

"Peace, friend," said old Penfold. "Here is not England, nor stand we on English territory. Let yonder papists worship their saints and idols to their own decay. We are but few in number, though valiant in spirit, and with every man a wound to show. Remember also that this ship is not yet our prize."

"Croaker," muttered Hough disdainfully.

"Say rather a man to whom age has brought sound judgment," returned Penfold, unmoved.

"It is my turn," said the deep voice of the unknown. "Sir Captain, I have a favour to beg. There is a gun yonder on which I have set my eye, a brass gun of some twenty pounds weight, loaded with ball. If it displease you not, I will discharge that gun from the aftmost deck in such a manner that it shall harm

no man. Sir Captain, I have some small experience in aiming the gun."

Penfold set his rugged face towards his questioner.

"Good sir," he said, "you are English among Englishmen. We are plain countrymen of the royal county of Berks, village yeomen of small degree, who have beaten our plowshares into swords; but you, I may believe, judging from your speech, are somewhat higher. Tell us, if you will, your name."

"My name is my own, my sword the king's, my life belongs to my country," said the stranger. "Enough to know that I am a man of Kent. If now I have answered you, sir, I beg of you to answer me."

"We should but reveal ourselves."

"Every minute widens yon strip of water between ourselves and the pursuer. She is sailing her fastest, and each minute sends us more of the wind which she has been taking from us. This breeze may endure for another hour, by which time we shall have reached the chasm which is called Tadousac. Sixteen years have I dwelt upon this river, good master, both in winter and summer, and no servant of King Louis, nor Indian of the forest, knows its waters better than I."

Penfold turned to the two associates supporting him. "What answer shall I give?" he asked.

"Consent," said fanatic and youth together; and Penfold gave consent against his better judgment.

Unaided, the stranger carried the short gun up the steps, rested it in position upon its crutch on the sloping deck, and arranged the priming, while the stern boy at his bidding produced knife and flint.

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The men below awaited results with a certain curiosity, looking for little more than an explosion of powder, and the hurling of a defiant missile harmlessly into space.

It might have been the excellence of the aim, it might have been the working of Providence, more probably it was sheer commonplace English luck; but, when the quaint little weapon had howled, kicked viciously, and rolled over, there came the dull crash of lead with wood, a shower of tough splinters, and—most glorious sight for the adventurers' eyes—the top of the French mainmast, carrying the great white and gold flag, which had been blessed by a bishop upon the high altar of Notre Dame in Paris, sprang into the air like a pennoned lance, described a half circle, and plunged to deck, piercing the canopy as though it had been paper, missing the ministrant by inches only, scattering the candlesticks and breaking the candles before the eyes of the scandalised soldiers, who were concluding their devotions to the "*Ite missa est*" of the priest.

A great cheer ascended from the Dutch ship, making the cold, pine-clad hills echo and ring. Hough forgot his sternness, and laughed aloud as he clasped the gunner's hand. Old Penfold smiled grimly, with more inward jubilation than he cared to show.

"Now plume her, lads, and let us fly," he shouted. "Steer her around yonder bend in safety, and we may laugh at her cannon."

"The prisoners, captain! We cannot both fight the ship and hold guard over them."

"To the river with them," said Hough. "Let them swim ashore."

"There may be some who cannot swim."

"What better chance shall they have of learning? My father cast me into the Thames when I was but a whipster, and said, 'Sink or swim, my lad.' And I thought it well to swim."

Protesting, struggling, swearing in an unknown tongue, the prisoners were brought forth from the cabins and hurried over the side, the laggards helped by a cuff or kick at starting. The turgid river splashed with Dutchmen, like a school of porpoises, making with what speed they could—for the water was exceedingly cold—towards the rock-bound shore.

Great was the confusion upon the Frenchman when she became so notably disgraced, but presently D'Archand restored a semblance of order, and the men trailed off to their duties, probably not a little afraid at discovering that the ever-dreaded English, whose appearance north of far-distant Plymouth had become a familiar nightmare, were aboard their supposed Dutch ally. La Salle, who had immediately rushed into his cabin and there divested himself of his ecclesiastical finery, speedily reappeared in secular costume with his redoubtable sword naked in his hand. The abbé could swear as heartily as any soldier when put to it, which fact he proved beyond lawyers' arguments then and there.

"Body of St. Denis!" he cried. "See to your priming, knaves. Ah, hurry, young imp of the pit," kicking a scrambling powder-boy as he shouted. "By St. Louis, our Lady, and the Cardinal! This is a Dutch word, a Dutch troth, a Dutch alliance. We shall harry the traitors who have leagued themselves

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with our enemies, unless their master, Satan, lends them wings to carry them to the uttermost parts of the earth. We shall hang them speedily to the rigging, if the saints be favourable. Fire, rogues! See you not that she is slipping away from us? Ah, for a sand bank, or sunken rock, to catch her as she runs! Mark you now, when I throw a curse over them, how they shall be brought down in their pride."

Despite the malediction of Holy Church, the trim Dutchman swept on nearly a quarter of a mile ahead. Sailors manned the rigging, and crammed on as much additional sail as the masts would bear; the dishonoured flag was replaced; Roussilac paced the main deck, pale with rage, his fingers clasp- ing and unclasp- ing his sword-hilt. D'Archand hurried to and fro, issuing orders with typical French rapidity.

A jet of smoke broke over her bows, and a ball threw up a spout of water in the wake of the fleeing vessel.

"A most courteous and inoffensive messenger," quoth Flower, bowing to the enemy. "Captain, shall we not make a suitable reply?"

"I fear me powder and ball are out of reach," said the captain. "The noisy hornets below guard the magazine. Would that we had a flag to hoist over us, though it were nothing more comprehensible to our foes than the five heads of county Berks."

Another gun exploded, and after it another, and so they continued ringing their wild music, the balls falling astern for the most part, though more than one whizzed through the rigging, yet without doing more damage than cutting a rope.

"Take her wide round yonder point, master helms-

man," cried the stranger. "There lies a mud-bank stretching under the water well-nigh to mid-stream. Mark you the place where it ceases by the ripple across the river? Steer your passage to the left of that ripple, and all shall go well."

"Methinks the wind blows more keenly," said Woodfield.

"There is coming upon us that wind which the Indians call the life of the day, a breath of storm from the west which endures but a few moments, blowing away the vapours of early morn and the last clouds of night," said the man of Kent. "We may be sure of that wind at this season of the year. After it follows calm, and the sun grows hot. Haul down the lower main-sail, Sir Leader. The heavy mist upon yonder hills tells us that the wind shall blow full strength this morning."

Even as he spoke a ball from the enemy's bows roared overhead, and snatched away a portion of the sail he indicated. The loose canvas began already to flap and the flying ropes to whistle in the wind.

"Let it remain so," said the Kentishman. "We have no need to take in our sail since they have saved us the work. Didst see how she staggered then? She shall never carry all that weight of canvas through the life of the day, and the wind bears more heavily on her than upon us. Ah, she gains!"

It was as he had said. The unwieldy vessel fell into the breath of the wind, and, righting herself after a sudden lurch, settled down into the water, ploughing a deep white furrow, every mast bending and every rope straining, every inch of canvas bellying mightily.

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The Dutchman came out to avoid the mud flat. She began to make the bend, and her helmsman already saw the wide reach of river beyond, when a terrible shout ascended from the men who were caged between decks. At the same moment a pungent odour tainted the free air, and a thin blue vapour began to leak from the cracks and joinings of the planks.

The Dutchman was burning internally. Soon her deck smoked like a dusty road under wind, and the shouts of the prisoners became terrible to endure. The adventurers smelt the choking fumes, saw the curling vapours, and their faces grew pale with the knowledge that they had to face a more dangerous foe than the French, knowing well that any moment a spark or a flame might touch the magazine.

"Unfortunates!" groaned Penfold. "I had hoped to win this ship, and with her sail to Virginia, there to gather a crew of mine own people, and return hither to harry the French."

"To the boats," cried Flower. "Better be sunk by a cannon ball than perish like rats in a corn-stack."

The wind rushed down from the westward rocks with a shout. It smote the waters of the St. Lawrence, beating them into waves. It penetrated the womb of the Dutch vessel, and fanned the smouldering fire into life. It plucked at the cordage, fought with the sails, and bent the masts until they cracked again. It came in a haze through which the sun glowed faintly, and behind over the unseen heights the sky cleared and burst into blue patches, because the passing of the life of the day was as sudden as its birth.

Down went the mizzenmast of the Frenchman with its crowning weight of canvas, carrying away the spanker, the shrouds, davits, and quarter boat; and her sky-sails, which a moment before had raked the breeze so proudly, spread disabled in the river. She dragged on with her wreckage, while men with axes swarmed into the poop to cut away the dead weight of wood and saturated canvas. The mainmast curved like a bow from the main shrouds to the truck, but remained fast until the haze broke, and the sky became a field azure, from which the sun shone out in his might.

Flames were now pouring from the doomed ship, and the poop was a mass of fire. The Englishmen ran for the boats, into which they flung every article upon which they could lay their hands: sword and guns, axes, clothing, provisions, bedding, and even spare sails and ropes. Everything would serve some useful purpose in their life upon the shore. The lord of the isles alone took nothing. He entered his canoe with the boy, and before the adventurers quitted the doomed ship they had reached the shore and entered the cover of the trees, the man carrying the light canoe beneath his arm.

"Release the prisoners," cried Flower, as he cast his last burden into the boat.

"Not so," replied the vindictive Hough. "Let them perish like the men of Amalek before Israel."

"Nay, we are no cold-blooded murderers," protested Woodfield. "Unfasten the hatches, and let them save themselves."

"Have they not been delivered into our hands that we may destroy them?" said Hough.

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"Now you would undo the good work, and raise up again a host to be our destruction in the time to come."

"Let us not argue, lest we be destroyed," said young Viner. "What says our captain?"

But old Penfold was lying back in the boat, fainting with exhaustion and loss of blood, and when Woodfield appealed to him he only murmured the death sentence of the Dutchmen, "Let Jeremiah Hough command."

"Cast off," said the Puritan. "Let the enemies of our country perish. The Lord do so to me and more also if I spare any of the accursed race who have sworn to sweep England from the seas."

So the boat pushed off, and came after hard rowing to the shore, beside the mouth of the little river which enters the main stream midway between Cap Tourmente and the cleft of the Saguenay. Up this river the men pulled to find a place for encampment, until the sweet-smelling pine forest closed behind and hid them from their enemies, whose flag they had flouted and beaten that day. While they worked their way inland a mighty explosion shook the atmosphere, the cones rained from the overhanging trees, the rock land thrilled, the face of the water shivered, and the birds flew away with screams.

"I fear me," said Hough, as he ceased his nasal droning of a psalm, "I fear me that the popish dogs have been given time to rescue the Hollanders."

True it was that the French had been allowed both time and opportunity for setting at liberty the wretches in the burning ship, but neither Roussillac

nor any of his captains dared to lead the venture, knowing that any moment might witness the destruction of the ship. The master took in his sails, cast anchor, and waited for the end.

Thus the undertaking of Holland failed, as her treachery deserved. It was her one attempt at wresting the fortress from the Cardinal's grip. And from that day to this no man-of-war from the Netherlands has ever sailed up the gulf of the St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER VIII.

COUCHICING.

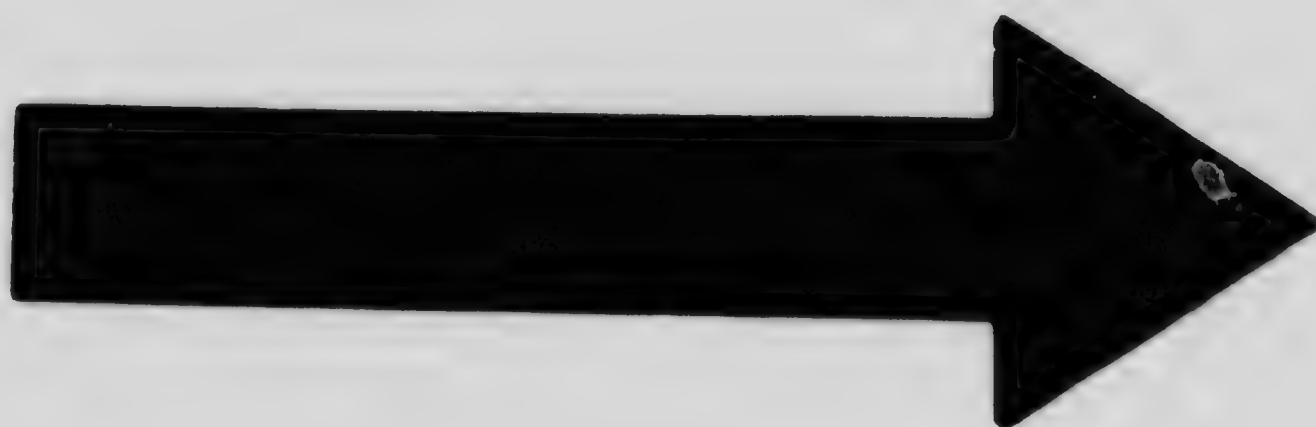
A MONTH went after the failure of the Dutch venture, and the sachems of the Iroquois still awaited the signal of the raft of fire. Van Vuren had entered the fortress that morning which witnessed the loss of his ship, and there remained at the mercy of the French, spending his days in making friendly overtures to the commandant, avoiding La Salle—who still refused to believe that it was not Van Vuren who had been his cowardly attacker that distant night at the street corner in Avignon—and anxiously inquiring for news concerning the expedition which he had sent out to the west. The Dutchman was being punished for his treachery by the knowledge that a sword was suspended by an exceedingly frail thread above his head, for he strongly suspected that the dwarf Gaudriole was cognisant of his visits to the council fire. He was therefore afraid to approach the Indians again; but his mind was yet occupied with its former plot of seizing the fortress with their aid.

During that month Roussilac had not been idle. With half his men he had harried the country to east and west, that he might find and hang the Englishmen who had dared to occupy his territory and disgrace his flag. He did not venture into the forests of the north, because the Iroquois were masters there. Once the adventurers came very near to being taken,

but bravery and English luck opened a way for their escape. They were, however, compelled to abandon their cave among the cliffs, and flee for refuge into the district inhabited by the friendly Cayugas; and there, a few paces from the brink of Couchicing, the Lake of Many Winds, they built them a hiding-place surrounded by a palisade, which they ambitiously named New Windsor. To the north they were protected by the face of the water, to the south by the primæval forest; on the west the Cayugas held the land, on the east the Oneidas, both tribes well disposed towards the English and bitterly hostile to the French.

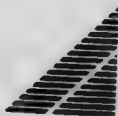
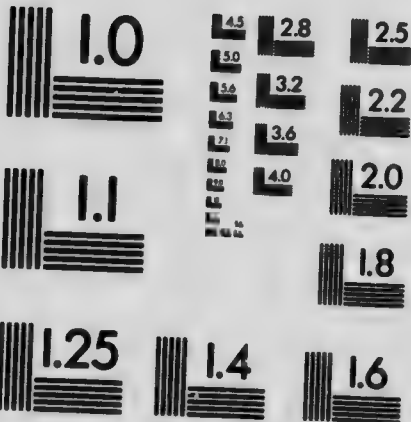
Finding himself again defeated, Roussilac cast about in his mind for a sounder policy, and finally resolved to adopt Samuel de Champlain's cunning and stir up the Algonquins anew to attack their hereditary foes. Accordingly he despatched Gaudriole with a couple of soldiers to the north, with a present of guns and ammunition and a message to the chief Oskelano, praying him to descend straightway to the river, and view for himself the majesty and power of the representatives of the King of France. Oskelano, a treacherous and heartless rogue, snatched at the gifts, asked greedily for more, and consented to return with the dwarf to the fortress.

This move on the part of the commandant escaped the knowledge of the men who were busy in their way spinning the web of England's empire, fighting for their own existence and for supremacy at one and the same time. At their councils figured the lord of the isles—whose well-hidden shelter in the heart of the region of the lost waters had never



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been suspected by the searching party—and his stern young son. Since that unlooked-for meeting on the deck of the Dutch vessel the Kentishman had come into frequent contact with the men of Berks, and their common nationality, cause, and necessities had quickly forged a stubborn tie between them. But the geniality of the yeomen never succeeded in breaking down the reserve of their mysterious colleague. When asked to recount some portion of his past history he would but answer brusquely, and when they demanded to know his name he merely returned his former answer, "I am a man of Kent."

During that month another provision ship, the *St. Wenceslas* of Marseilles, had sailed up the St. Lawrence, and so soon as she had made fast and told the news of the world D'Archand lifted anchor and headed for home, carrying Roussilac's despatches, and those soldiers and settlers who, by reason of wounds or sickness, had become unfitted to fulfil their military obligations. The French Government had taken advantage of the dissensions which were rending England apart to send by the *St. Wenceslas* more emigrants into the new world—all picked men, destined by the Government to be established, willing or unwilling, regardless of soil or natural advantages, upon such districts as might be considered to need strengthening, there to survive or to become extinct. It would be their duty to form, not a settlement capable of extension, but a military post; and they would be sustained by supplies brought over from France by warships. It was a weak policy, bound by the test of time to fail. The English motto was settlement and a friendly attitude towards the

natives ; that of her great colonial rival, aggrandisement and the destruction of the aborigines.

These facts were remembered by the venturers, when they beheld the coming of the one ship and the departure of the other, and, egotists though they were, the truth that they could not possibly form a settlement unaided became at last too obvious to be ignored. After repeated deliberations they decided upon a course which was indeed the only one open to them. The advice, that one of the party should attempt to reach the king's loyal town of Boston by overland journey and there beg for help, proceeded in the first instance from the man of Kent. He explained that the province of Massachusetts was well occupied by Englishmen of every grade—soldiers of fortune as well as artisans, farmers, and titled scions of great houses ; and, he added, there were ships of war in Boston and Plymouth harbours. This advice found favour in the eyes of the others, and they proceeded to draw lots to decide which one should make the hazard. The lot fell upon Geoffrey Viner, the youngest of the party. His seniors at once held forth objections, grounded upon his youth and inexperience ; but the boy as stoutly held out for his privilege, until the dissentients gave way.

At noon upon the day which had been selected for the young man's departure, the lord of the isles appeared at New Windsor to bid the messenger farewell. Geoffrey went out with him, and they stood alone in the shade of a hemlock, facing the lake and a white cascade which streamed like a bridal veil over the face of the rocks. After the Kentishman had imparted what little knowledge he had of the country

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to the south, he went on to fix deeply into the mind of his listener the importance of seeing Lord Baltimore, the Governor of New England, personally, and of impressing the papist peer strongly with the vital necessity of sending immediate succour to the north.

"And what if my Lord Baltimore will not hear me, or hearing will not believe?" asked Geoffrey anxiously.

"Give to him this ring," replied the other, drawing reluctantly from his left hand a gold circlet set with a stone bearing a coat-of-arms. "Bid him remember the promise made to this ring's owner one summer night in a Kentish orchard. Bid him also recall the words of King Henry the Sixth upon Southwark Bridge, hard by Saint Mary Overies, to his ancestor the keeper of the privy seal, and to mine the sheriff of Kent."

"Think you that our plans shall prosper?" the young man asked.

"Have no doubt. Believe that already we have succeeded. Persuade yourself that the French are driven out of their fastnesses, and the land from Acadia to Hochelaga gives allegiance to King Charles. As a man wills so shall it be. And yet be cautious."

"Should I not bid them attack Acadia first? It is but a small colony, and open to the water they say."

"Nay," said the other. "Let us fight with our faces to the sea. How shall it profit us to drive our enemy inland and disperse them as a swarm of flies which rises and settles in another spot? We must drive them eastward to the sea, where they shall either conquer or die. I pray you guard that ring."

As they moved away from the hemlock's shade

a canoe swept over the lake and touched the sand, and two stern-faced Cayugas lifted their paddles, shaking the water from the blades. These brought a brace of land-locked salmon to the beach. A young woman followed, and after her an old man, his thick hair adorned with a bunch of feathers. These were Shuswap and Onawa, his youngest daughter.

The lord of the isles went forward, and met his native relatives upon the beach.

"Gitsa," cried the old man. "We greet you, Gitsa."

"Is it well, Shuswap?"

"It is the time of the wind of life, the good time," the old man answered. "The waters are free, and the animals breed in the forest. Where are the white men of the smooth tongue, Gitsa? Where are the men who came to us at the council fire and said to us, 'Your enemy is our enemy. Aid us now when we rise up against them'? Shall they return with the wind of life?"

"The north wind came upon them and swept them away," his son-in-law replied, employing the sachem's figurative speech. "You have something to tell me, Shuswap?"

"There is a strange ship come to the high cliffs, a great ship from the land of the accursed people," said the old man. "What is this that you have told us, Gitsa? Said you not that the King of England shall send many ships and men when the ice has gone, to drive out the men of France and restore their own to the tribes of the Iroquois? What is this that we see? The priest of France sends more ships, and more men who shall kill the beasts of the forest and

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the fish of the waters, and drive us back with their fire-tubes into the forests of the north where the enemies of our race, the Algonquins, lie ever in wait. Is there a king in England, Gitsa? Has he ships to send out? Has he men to put into them? Have you lied to the sachems of the Iroquois?"

"Be not afraid, Shuswap," said the white man. "You shall learn whether there be a king of England or no. But he has many enemies in the far-away world, and these he must conquer first. Even now we are sending a messenger to the king's country, and he shall return with ships and men, and the French shall flee before them."

The man of Kent spoke with a heavy heart. He dared not confess what he believed to be the truth—namely, that England was already embroiled in civil war.

"A tribe divided against itself shall be annihilated," said the sachem sharply, with the clairvoyant power of the primitive man. "The remaining tribes stand by until it is exhausted, and then fall upon that tribe, and it is known no more. Is it so with the English, Gitsa?"

"It is not so," replied the Englishman, a flush upon his tanned features. "England stands above other nations of the world, even as the sun is greater than all lights. She shines over the earth in her strength. Were there no England the world would fall into decay, the creatures who supply us with meat and fur would die, the fish would fail in the waters, the forests would wither, there would be no rain and no light by night or by day. The sun would turn black, the moon would fall into the sea, the very gods

would die if England were no more. She shall take possession of this land in her own time, and Frenchmen shall have no place in it except as subjects of our king."

The old sachem lifted his cunning eyes and said: "It is well, Gitsa. But if it be so, why does not your king lift his hand and drive away his enemies, or blow with his breath and destroy their ships? Surely that would be a small thing to a king who governs the world."

"It would be a small thing in truth," replied the Englishman, smiling in spite of his sorrow. "But the ways of the king are not our ways. He allows his enemies to go upon their course, until a day comes when he shall say, 'You have gone too far.' It is thus that he shows his power."

"It is so," said the sachem gravely. "We cannot read the mind of him who rules. One year there are many animals in the forest, and we live in plenty. The next we starve. A small tribe overthrows a great one. A great tribe becomes too prosperous and is plagued with pestilence. The young men are smitten. The old live on. The wind destroys the forest, the river breaks its own banks. The lightning strikes down the totem-pole which we have raised for his pleasure. It is so. There is a mystery in life. The gods destroy their own handiwork. They remove the strong, and let the weak survive."

He passed on, an erect figure, in spite of his age, and treading firmly.

Onawa, a silent listener to their talk, stepped out. She was good to look upon, with her wealth of black hair, her large eyes, her rounded face, her cheeks and

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lips lightly touched with paint, her slim muscular figure. She could run against any man, and aim an arrow with the sureness of any forester of Nottingham. But she was headstrong, as changeable as water, and the Englishman did not trust her.

"Where have you been, Onawa?" he said.

"I have come from the camp with my father," she replied. "Where have you left your son? They say, among the tribes, that he grows into a great warrior. They say also that he carries wood and draws water and cuts up the deer which he has killed. Our young men despise a woman's work."

"I have taught him the duty of helping his mother," came the reply. "In my country a man lives for his mother or his wife, and her good favour is his glory."

The girl hesitated, a frown crossing her forehead. "Why are the French so beautiful, so bold-looking?" she asked suddenly.

"That they may captivate the minds and eyes of women who are weak."

"They are better to look at than Englishmen. They do not wear old garments marked with dirt. They do not let the hair upon their faces grow down their bodies. They do not talk deep in their throats. They are not serious. I love to hear them talk, to see them move. They walk like men who own the world."

"I have warned you against them," he said earnestly. "They are the natural enemies of your people. Consider! What Frenchman has ever married into your tribe and settled down among you?"

The girl laughed scornfully, and turned to go, grasping her long hair in her hand.

"You hide from them because you know that they are better men than you," she taunted. "It was a Frenchman who first came to our country from the other world. Perhaps there was no England in those days. The sun loves to shine upon Frenchmen. The English live in the mists. You have taken my sister for wife, but I—I, Onawa, daughter of Shuswap, would marry a Frenchman."

"Never shall I wish you a harder fate," retorted the calm man; and having thus spoken he turned aside towards the tiny English settlement to greet his friends and join again his son.

It was the first hour of night when Viner started upon his great journey. The forest was white with a moon, and sparks of phosphorus darted across the falls. When the wooden bars were drawn out of their sockets and the five men emerged from the palisade, the monotonous chirping of frogs ceased abruptly, and a great calm ensued.

In single file they passed along the dark trail, the bush sweeping their legs, the branches locked overhead. They rounded the red fires which marked the camping-ground of the Oneidas; they smelt the acrid smoke, and dimly sighted many a brown lean-to; the dogs jumped out barking. They passed, the lights disappeared, the silence closed down. Presently the trail divided; the branch to the left leading to the river, that to the right bearing inland to the lakes, rivers, and hunting-grounds known only to the Indians.

"Get you back now," said Viner, halting at the

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parting of the ways. "We are already in the country of the enemy. Bid me here God-speed."

There they clasped hands, and in the act of farewell Flower slipped into Vincr's hand a little black stone marked with a vein of chalk. "Keep it, lad," he muttered. "One spring when I was near drowning in the Thames by being held in the weeds I caught this stone from the river-bed. Methinks it has protected me from ill. May that same fortune be on you, and more added to it, in the work which lies before you."

A ray of moonlight fell through an opening in the trees, and whitened the five keen faces.

"Superstition made never a soldier of any man," muttered the stern voice of the Puritan. "Fling that idolatry to the bush, Geoffrey, and go your way, trusting rather in the Lord with a psalm upon your lips."

"It is but a reminder of home for the lad," protested Flower gently. "We have each other. But in the solitudes what shall he have?"

"'Tis but a stone from our river, friend Hough," said Geoffrey timidly. "I thank you, neighbour," he added.

"Fare you well," said old Penfold sadly. "We shall lack you sore."

They turned away, and instantly became lost from the man who was going south, because the trail bent sharply. The little band of adventurers, now reduced to four, walked slowly and sorrowfully towards New Windsor, until they came out upon the lake, and heard the beavers gnawing the rushes, and the wind splashing the fresh water up the beach.

"What has come to our nightingales?" said Penfold suddenly. "I like not this silence."

The frogs about the palisade were songless, and the sign was ominous. At their leader's hasty remark the others came to stand, and scanned the prospect keenly, until silently and abruptly the ghost-like shape of a woman rose between them and the moon.

"'Tis but the girl Onawa, daughter of Shuswap," muttered Woodfield reassuringly; but there was a suspicion in his mind which prompted him to add, "What does she here?"

Even while he put the question Hough cried out, and pointed with a wild gesture, feeling that same moment for his sword. Gazing in the direction which he indicated with a quivering hand, his brethren saw before them the palisade, but not as they had left it. The wooden bars had been set back into their sockets, as though to forebode the occupation of their enclosure by an enemy.

"Stay!" called Onawa haughtily, when the men approached her at a run. "Your tepée has passed from you into the power of the king."

"There is only one king," cried old Penfold. Then he shouted at her, for all the land to Lear, "What king?"

"King Louis," said the girl defiantly.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GAUNTLET DOWN.

OSKELANO, chief of the Algonquins, that unstable race, false alike to friend and foe, and doomed to be the first of the savage tribes to be extinguished, reached the fortress about noon on the day which had been fixed for Geoffrey's departure to the unknown lands. Roussilac personally met the treacherous old man upon the heights, and dazzled his savage eyes with the splendour of a blue surcoat, upon which gleamed the fleur-de-lys worked in gold. He proceeded to point out the soldiers in their brave array, the strong huts of wood or stone dotted about the cliff, the *St. Wenceslas* riding upon the river, the glistening guns, and the flashing steel. Finally he bade the old savage note the impregnable nature of the French position.

"Behold the citadel which my master has ordered me to build for your protection," the commandant continued, pouring his figments through the leering mouth of the dwarf Gaudriole. "We have not destroyed your forests, nor robbed you of your shelters. You may enter our forts in safety, and obtain whatsoever you desire in exchange for skins and feathers. We do not mass together in one place. We distribute our strength. Our forts are dotted along the coast. The tribes of Maryland and of Massachusetts have shown you how the English congregate upon the Potomac River. When you go to them for sup-

plies of food, or demanding recompense for that which they have taken from you, they threaten you with death. Is it not so?"

"Um," replied the Algonquin, not a muscle of his face stirring.

"The English have their eye upon this north of the continent," went on the governor. "In the south they rule, but only by permission of our king. Have you obtained any benefits from them? Have they not rather hunted you like wild beasts when you have resisted them? Remember how Samuel de Champlain armed you so that you might fight against the tribes of the Iroquois. He did not fear the Iroquois, but he saw you in danger, and reached out his hand to save you."

"Um, um," exclaimed Oskelano, with some symptom of feeling.

"And now the King of France bids you choose between him and Charles of England. If you accept my master's friendship he shall protect you from your enemies. But if you refuse him he shall leave you to the mercy of the Iroquois and the English, who shall rob and kill you until there is not one Algonquin left."

"The chief desires to know," said the interpreter, "why it is that the English in the south have brought their wives and families, and why the French come alone."

"The English desire to take the country that they may make it their home and abide here for ever," answered Roussilac. "The French are here to protect the Algonquins, and when danger is over they shall return to their wives and families in the homeland."

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"The chief also desires to know what is the cause of the king's friendliness to a people whom he has never seen," continued the interpreter.

"King Louis has forbidden the English to enter this country, and when they disobey he sends ships and men against them. It is his will that the Algonquins shall possess this land in peace."

"Um," said Oskelano profoundly, when these fictions had been expounded.

"What says the wooden-faced fool?" asked Roussilac.

"The doctors of his tribe tell him that all white men are liars," replied the dwarf. "But the English are greater liars than the French."

"Would that I might collect all the savages in this country upon yonder island in mid-stream, and there exterminate them root and branch," the governor muttered.

"Import a shipload of bad brandy, commandant," suggested the interpreter, with an evil grin. "That would spread a disease which might carry them off in a few generations."

"What say you?" exclaimed Roussilac. "Away, hunchbacked devil!"

But when Oskelano had gone to the quarters which had been prepared for him, and Gaudriole had followed with a grating laugh, Roussilac remained to pace the cliff and consider the evil thought. "'Tis a vile plan," he muttered. "Yet beasts are poisoned when they overrun the land. By St. Louis, it is a plan which might work."

That poor twisted freak of nature, Gaudriole, had lived formerly in the gutters of Paris by his wits and

the predatory powers of his fingers, begging by day, stealing by night. Favoured by fortune beyond his deserts, he had continued to escape the great stone gallows which had been erected for the dismissal of vagabonds of his kind, and had finally escaped to the New World, there to fall speedily into the hands of the Indians. Having saved his life by the performance of some sleight-of-hand tricks, he robbed the tribe which had taken him captive and escaped that same night. For years he had lived among the natives, learning their language, adopting their manner of living, until he had made himself as much at home in the dense forests as in the slums of his native city. Indian braves and French soldiers alike stood in awe of him on account of his impish form and devilish ways. The governors of the forts found him useful because he brought them information. The free life suited the unprincipled dwarf, who was little better than an animal invested with a trick of reasoning; and he knew that, like an animal, he was liable to be hanged and his body thrown to the crows any day of his sinful life.

The cabaret in the Rue des Pêcheurs was noisy that evening because the ship which had lately arrived from Marseilles had replenished Michel's casks. Soldiers were gaming behind the red curtain which half-blinded the single window, and fierce songs sounded under the cliff as Gaudriole shuffled down the pathway. The dwarf had not listened to the welcome noise of the tavern for many a month, and his crooked heart heated at the sound.

"Saints of God!" the high voice of La Salle sounded. "If it be true, as they say, that the devil

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lends favour to gamblers, then are you lost, brother, body and soul. Michel, an you sing that lewd song again—— A plague strike you drunkards! Have the streets of Marseilles no new song? ”

“There is nothing new, my father,” bawled a hoarse voice. “His sacred Eminence holds all France as a man might contain in his hand an egg. Only strong men, good fighters, be they priests or laymen, find favour in the Cardinal’s eyes, and ’tis said, though with what truth I know not, that he sways his Holiness as the wind may play with a cornstalk. Not a brick has been added to Marseilles this year past. The very mass-bread is mouldy, and the women are hags——”

“Peace, brute!” La Salle shouted. “Laroche, smite me yon babbler across his mouth.”

Standing in the doorway, Gaudriole saw the fat priest heave, and aim a terrific blow at a half-drunken soldier whose head lolled against the wall. The dwarf shuffled forward with his malevolent laugh as the soldier lurched aside with an oath.

“The English are upon you, Messires!” he shouted with all his strength.

Instantly there arose indescribable confusion. Trestles and stools were flung aside, wine from overthrown goblets soaked black patterns into the earthen floor, as every soldier made for the outside, grasping his sword, or swearing because he could not find it. Out of the noise grated the laugh of the dwarf, who slunk against the log wall, rubbing his hairy hands.

“A jest! A jest!” screamed Ferraud of shrill voice, his waxen face regaining colour as he wagged his hand at the dwarf. “Masters, behold Gaudriole!

Liar, hunchback, bastard ! Were you used as you deserve you would hang from the roof-tree. Masters, come back. There are no English within a thousand miles."

"What found ye outside, my soldiers?" chuckled Gaudriole, as the men of Mars tumbled disorderedly into the cabaret. "There is the wind. The west wind, which the Indians say brings all that a man may wish for. Comrades, did ye find the wind?"

His hideous figure doubled, and his laughter grated again.

"Buffoon of the pit!" cried Laroche, striding up and shaking the dwarf until his head rolled. "Would make a laughing-stock of his Majesty's brave men, deformed imp of darkness? Come forth now and sing to us. Sing to us, I say, lest I beat your crooked shape into a lath."

Because Gaudriole was aware of his value he dared to play such pranks. He was indeed a capably grotesque comedian, and formerly had garnered many a capful of sous at the corners of Paris by his antics, songs, and contortions. His pathetic shape had saved him from the punishment which often attended the tricks of less daring jesters; and it may be surmised that his malignant face and cross-seeing eyes not unfrequently repelled the would-be striker. Men were superstitious in the days when the world was large.

"Some wine first," the hunchback panted, for the priest's arm was rough. "The ship moves not till she has wind in her sails. I have been a drinker of water these months, and my dreams have been red of wine. Ah, friend! may your beard grow golden, and curl even as your mistress would have it."

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This to a singularly ugly soldier, with a flat, scarred face and stubbly black beard, who handed him a potful of wine.

"My beard becomes me well enough," the man growled, when a laugh went against him.

"Well, in faith. It grows out of your skin like bristles from a chimney-brush."

"Cease your gibes, hunchback, and to your capers, We grow thin for want of laughter in this accursed country," cried Laroche.

"What shall it be, Messires, a dance, a clever contortion, or a song—a song of fair ladies, such as one may see upon the streets of Paris, saving the presence of these most holy and renowned priests?" jeered Gaudriole, with his intolerable laugh.

"All. Give us all, buffoon, and invent somewhat for the occasion," the master of ceremonies ordered.

Not loth to practise his talents, Gaudriole took the centre of the floor. Voice, in a musical sense, he had none. The noise he made was little better than the screech of wind roaring through the hollow mouth-piece of some gargoyle of the roof-gutter. Every fresh contortion of his face was more hideous than the last, as he danced, shouted, and twisted bonelessly over the wine splashes on the ground, until he appeared to the spectators as some frightful creature of nightmare, presenting the evil scenes and actions of their past lives before their wide-opened eyes.

He concluded his vaudeville amid shouts of applause, in which La Salle alone took no part. The priest was disgusted at this exhibition of so much that was brutal, and he was disgusted with himself for remaining a listener and a watcher. He was, for

those days, well-educated, and the spectacle of the little monster writhing and yelling before him repelled. It was Paris in truth that Gaudriole recalled; but not, for him, the Paris of the corners and by-ways, not the Paris of vagabonds and free-livers, but the city of the most brilliant court upon earth, the city of intrigue where Cardinal Richelieu spun his red web to entangle the feet of kings. The cabaret was but an interlude, a by-way of the path to power; but the priest realised, as he sat among the fools, that he had trodden the by-ways frequently and too well.

He left the tavern with its fumes of smoke and wine, and escaped into the cool, moist wind under the cliff, but a pair of cross-seeing eyes followed his departure, and Gaudriole wormed his way through a labyrinth of arms that would have detained him for more folly, and hopped loosely up the ascent of the crooked path.

"What would you, creature of sin?" demanded La Salle, when he perceived who it was that followed him.

"A word with you, holiness," panted the dwarf. "The woman Onawa sends you greeting and prays that you will meet her at the beginning of the forest where formerly she saw you by chance. She engages to show you where your enemy may be found. She waits for you now, most renowned."

"Dog!" exclaimed La Salle. "What have I to do with this woman? What enemy is it of whom she speaks? I have no enemy save Van Vuren, who lives now under the protection of the governor, and slinks at his heels like a frightened hound."

Gaudriole could never suppress the malignant

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grin which escaped from the ends of his slit mouth whenever he spoke.

"I but repeat the message as it was spoken. Think you that I dare betray a Frenchman, and that a most holy priest? An I wished to do so, the game would not be worth the candle. Gaudriole loves life as yonder crows love carrion."

"See you tell no man of this," the priest muttered, as he moved towards the cliff.

The way was rough, the breeze cold, as La Salle crossed the heights, turning once to see the flag beating over the fort and men creeping like midges about their tasks. He descended, and the swaying wall of forest broke the wind. The pale purple crocus pushed its furry hood from the short grass, the songless robins hopped before him, the smell of fresh water was in the air. The fighting priest felt strong as he breathed the wind.

Onawa flashed out of the brush and waved her bow to him.

"She has painted her face and looks forth ready for battle," said the priest. "A comely maid, by St. Louis. What a figure is there, and what freedom! She has a trick of moving her head which would make a fashion at court."

"Come!" Onawa called. "Hasten!"

She spoke in English, and hope revived in the heart of the priest.

"English. I show you," she cried. "I have waited a long time. It is growing late," she went on in her own tongue, hoping vainly that he might understand.

"I commit my body to this adventure," said La

Salle. "If these be the English who captured the Dutch vessel and mocked us, the reward of discovery shall be mine. A ship sails for home next week. Tidings from the New World carry apace throughout Europe. The first step. Ha, it is the first step that gives confidence. The rest is easy."

He followed Onawa along a trail which bewildered with innumerable twistings, and after an hour's sharp walking they reached an untrodden bed of sage brush glistening upon the flats. Onawa picked up a faint thread, which was invisible to La Salle's eyes, and led him on through bush where the spikes of dead pines snagged his feet. Then came a cold ravine down the sides of which quaking aspens drooped and moss spread thickly. More forest, growing every pace denser, until the girl stopped and motioned her companion to enter what appeared to be a hole made in the centre of a thicket. She held back the rough bushes to allow him to pass ahead. For a moment La Salle hesitated. He was human enough to know that his manliness had made an impression upon Onawa, but at the same time he feared treachery. The Iroquois were sworn foes of the French, and here was a daughter of the chief of the Cayugas abetting a Frenchman. He looked at the girl. She smiled brilliantly and made an impatient movement, and he advanced boldly into the cold thicket.

The ground shelved, and under the arched branches a spring freshet, scarcely seven feet in width, ran hurriedly into the unseen. A canoe rocked upon the water, held to the crooked root of a pine by a knotted willow. Onawa motioned him into this canoe, and when he had taken his place after sundry

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lurchings and difficulties, the girl stepped in, unfastened the twig, and struck her paddle into the water. The canoe swept away under the low branches.

"I would I had Laroche with me," said La Salle, watching the cold trees and the pale rocks approaching and receding.

"English," said Onawa softly from time to time. "I show you."

The trees went back and the rocks heightened. La Salle heard water rolling up a beach and the sweep of wind across an open surface. The freshet widened and grew more shallow; the keel of the canoe scraped across a ridge of silt. With a deft turn of her paddle Onawa shot the prow upon a sand bank, and signed to him to land.

She led him along a cliff path, across a flat, again into sage brush, and finally into more forest. They moved stealthily under cover, until the trees thinned, and willow scrub sprang thickly out of a grey soil. At a certain spot the girl halted and motioned her companion to look forth.

La Salle saw the little settlement of New Windsor nestling in its enclosure, and needed no longer the information, "English," which the girl offered with a smile.

They lay in wait while the night grew upon them. La Salle watched when the bars of the palisade were removed and five men came forth, and marvelled to learn the weakness of the enemy. A bold scheme instantly suggested itself. He would engage the enemy single-handed upon their return, and wear them down one by one.

Here Onawa became an obstacle, because he could not explain to her his intentions. He did his best by signs and broken English, but the girl misunderstood him. She believed that he was telling her that he had taken the settlement, and she was expected to instruct the Englishmen that their property had passed away from them.

The white moon ascended the sky. The wooden bars sprawled where the Englishmen had left them. La Salle felt confident that he would be able to strike down the owners of the place as they passed singly into the fort.

Suddenly a great hound came out of the forest, sniffed his way to the palisade, and stopped before the entry, growling and lashing his tail. Onawa recognised the hound, and called to him. He heard her voice and turned his leonine head to snarl fiercely. Then he headed for the forest, giving tongue as he ran. Onawa sprang to the palisade, and struggled to replace the bars. For a moment she pulled her blanket over her face, leaving none of it visible except the eyes and forehead, and the priest shivered. He remembered the mysterious swordsman who had wounded him upon the Rue des Pêcheurs. He assisted Onawa to put up the bars.

They heard voices in the forest. La Salle knew that he would require his full skill in sword-play to save himself that night.

CHAPTER X.

PILLARS OF THE HOUSE.

THE moonlight fell softly upon a clearing where a small fire smouldered, where the lord of the isles and his son sat in silence, and between them the great hound full-stretched in sleep. They were resting before returning home to their island among the lost waters. Only the cracking of the fiery wood, the overhead boughs chafing fitfully, and the snapping of twigs too brittle to survive disturbed the silence of the night.

The little group made a stern picture in the light of the moon. The hound litten and blemished by many a conquering fight; the lean man scarred by sword wounds; the boy scarce out of childhood, hungry to learn—even the boy wore his scars. He was developing in a hard school. He could not know that the work which his father pointed out would receive, if accomplished, neither thanks nor reward. The pioneers of empire might be compared with the insects of the coral reef, insignificant atoms who have planted a foundation for the sea to build upon.

"Father," said the boy at length, "shall we not be returning to our home?"

There was another interval before the stern man looked up.

"I think when you spoke that word I saw another home," he said, raising a hand to his eyes as

though he would dispel the vision. "I saw methinks a grey house, its chimneys wreathed with ivy. Lawns spread far, divided by paths, bound with close-cropped hedges of yew and lined with flowers, where peacocks lift their feathers to the sun. Down a green slope to the little river I see orchard of cherry, snowy with blossom. A road ends at a church where I may read your name and mine upon many a stone slab. There lies your grandfather, there my mother. It is peaceful in that garden of Kent, our home at the other side of the world."

Young Richard leaned forward over his knees. His father was speaking in parables. He had seen only the primæval forest, the river torrents, the lakes with their land-locked fish, the icefields. He had supposed the world to be made of such. He had heard the clash of swords, the shouts of war. He had supposed it was so the world over. A place of peace had never entered into the scheme of his boyish calculation.

"It is a dream of which you speak, father?"

"Ay, my lad, for me a dream. You perchance shall see England with your own eyes, for when I am gone you shall be the head of a family which has for its motto, 'Let traitors beware.' Son, have you never wished to learn your name?"

"My name is Sir Richard," answered the proud boy.

"I, your father, was called once Sir Thomas Iden. Formerly we were a famous family, but now we wane, wielding an influence only over the Kentish village which has been ours for centuries. Two hundred years past the then head of our family, holding the

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office of sheriff of his county at the time, slew a traitor named John Cade, who had openly rebelled against the crown, and for this King Henry the Sixth conferred upon him the honour of knighthood, presenting him also with a coat-of-arms. In return for other services his Majesty bestowed upon our house an unique privilege: right was granted to the head of the family in each generation to confer knighthood upon his eldest son, if that son should be deserving of the distinction. My father knighted me, when I returned from an exploit against the Irish; and I handed the honour on to you, when I found in you the hereditary longing for the sword."

The boy looked steadily across the fire, with wonder in his eyes. "This then is not our home," he said, weighing his words with strange gravity. "Should we not be in England, fighting for the king?"

"God knows he needs the pillars of our house to help support his throne," said Sir Thomas. "But no man can serve in two countries. I have made myself a colonist, have married a daughter of the land, here I can serve England if not my king, and here shall I die like a man of Kent, with my face to the foe. I was the first Englishman to make a home upon this bitter land. I resolved to build about me a colony, to do for the north what John Winthrop and the papist Lord Baltimore are doing in the south. I have appealed. I have sent for help. But England will not hear."

He paced through the wet grass, his hands clenched behind.

"Is the cry of the colonies nothing to them? A

handful of good men may only sell their lives dearly in the trust that their example may fire better men to deeds of conquest. Here we shall die in exile, and be sent to haunt the great oblivion of these forests. Two such ships-of-war as sailed from Devon in the golden days of Elizabeth, two such ships as the merchant traders of Cheapside could send us without loss, with another Hawkins to command, manned by our brave sailors of the east country, would sweep the French out of their forts and clear the land of them for ever. The Dutch hold the seas. France extends her arms. England is again divided, the bloody rivalry between the houses of York and Lancaster having taught her no wisdom. The Parliament is against the king, and the country must bleed for it. We are abandoned."

The boy knew nothing of the politics of Europe, neither could he enter into his father's dream of empire. He hated the French merely because they were enemies, and because they had betrayed the Iroquois. To go out and fight against them was more exciting, because more dangerous, than to engage with the beasts of the forest; but the struggle between the Powers of Europe for the ownership of North America had injected no venom into his soul.

"Shall I not live here always?" he asked. "Am I not to choose a maid from the Cayugas, and settle upon the isles beside you, my father?"

"Talk not of the future, son. Life is to-day, not hereafter. That lies in the hand of God to give or to withhold. You shall return when I am gone—return, did I say? You shall go to England with letters to a notary in Maidstone, and he shall see that

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you come into your own. You are dark of face, but English in heart, my Richard."

The boy lifted his head with a sudden sharp movement. "Perchance that day shall never come."

The hound also lifted his head, and as his eyes sought the haunt of shadows his jaw dropped in a wild howl.

"Spirits sweep across my burying-place," whispered the youth.

The hound lowered his head and howled again.

"Frenchmen," muttered the boy.

The brute slouched a few feet, broke into a trot, and disappeared.

"He goes in the direction of New Windsor," said the knight. "Hast heard any sound in the forest?"

"There is no stir," replied the boy, holding his well-trained ear to the ground. "The smoke from our fire carries. Let us go aside into the shadow of the bush and watch."

They retreated, flashing glances to right and left. The snap of a twig, the very crushing of pine needles, sufficed to disturb that calm. There was no premonitory shiver of the moon-rays, no suggestion of any human presence upon the chilled air. Their feet sank audibly into the white moss. Their breath made the semblance of a whisper between father and son, the lion ready, the cub longing. The rim of the deep shadow ran behind as they turned to face the clearing they had abandoned.

"The wind blows from New Windsor," said the knight. "The wind off Couchicing."

"If Blood takes hold of a man he shall die," went on the boy. "He will hold at the back of the neck,

and there hang until his fangs meet. Ha! Didst hear that?"

A branch had broken with a dry report. The trees moaned, and a few distended cones struck the ground like spent bullets.

"The breeze freshens. Methinks I hear the waves breaking upon the beach."

A raven passed before the moon, knelling violently.

"He smells carrion," whispered the boy. "Already he smells blood upon my sword."

"Peace, boy," said his father; adding, compassionately, "He is but a child."

"Nay, father," said Richard, his blood rising. "I am no child. See the mark of my wounds! Remember that glorious day when we captured the Dutch privateer. I have prayed for such another day. Did I there acquit myself as a child? Or did you call, 'Richard, come back! You are too bold.' Hast forgotten, Sir Thomas?"

His father passed the sword into his left hand, and threw his right arm about his son's shoulder, drawing him upon his own thin body, and kissed his cheek. Silence came between them. It was the first time that the man had kissed the boy, and both for a moment were ashamed; then young Richard's heart swelled with the pride of having won his father's love.

As they stood they moved, and their swords clashed. They remembered their other bond of relationship, the brotherhood of the sword, and each drew back.

The raven had gone, but his note came upon the wind.

The boy stood leaning forward, his ears drinking

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in the shuddering noises of the bush, his face sharp with cold. The smoke stood upright in the clearing like a swathed mummy. Now and again a spark drifted, or a flurry of white wood-ash circled. There was yet no voice from the lungs of the forest.

"Blood smelt no animal," said the resolute Richard. "He does but tongue softly when he follows a bear. That howl he gives when he runs on the track of a man."

"A wanderer lost in the forest. A spy from the fortress. One of Roussilac's creatures," his father muttered.

"They would take possession of the forest," the boy said passionately. "Along the river I have come upon trees marked by the robbers with—what is the name of that sign which they bear upon their flag?"

"The fleur-de-lys. They brand the pines with that mark to signify that the trees have been chosen for ship-masts and are the property of France. Our hut upon the island is faced with logs which bear their brand."

"The Cayugas fell such trees and burn them, or cut them in half as they lie. The Iroquois are yet masters, despite the decrees of King Louis. How cold is this wind! Let me but warm my hands in the embers of our fire."

The boy crossed into the moonlight, and knelt within the smoke, rubbing the palms of his hands upon the warm ground. His father stood in the shadow, and watched every moving line of his son's body, muttering as he listened to the outside:

"At his age I was learning how to figure and spell in Tonbridge school. Quarterstaff and tennis were

my sports, with mumming and chess at home. His sport is to hunt the wild beast, to track the deer, to lie in wait for men. The sword is his pastime. His pleasure the dream. God pardon me for bringing him into the world."

The breeze bore along in a gust, bringing the muffled bayings of a hound.

"He calls me!" exclaimed the boy. "That is Blood's war-cry. Come!" he shouted.

"Patience, boy. Let the dog guide us. By advancing recklessly we may fall into a trap."

Each throb of the night brought the wild sounds nearer. Blood was in full cry, the foam blowing from his jaws, the hackles stiff upon his back. He was coming down the wind full-stretched. The bush gave, the dew scattered from the high grass in frosty showers as he leapt the moss-beds, his foot-tracks far apart. But no sound followed, except the play of the branches and the murmur of the rising lake.

"Remember how I brought him from the encampment as a puppy," said Richard appealingly, "how I have trained him from the time that his eyes opened. Whatever he discovers is mine. Say now that I may go with him. He and I can cover the ground together. You shall follow in your own time."

"Perchance they shall be too many for you," said the father.

"Nay, we shall advance with care, and hide if there be danger. The whole army of France could not follow me in this forest."

"There comes no noise of fighting."

"It is but a spy who has discovered New Windsor. He must not carry that secret back to the fortress."

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The hound broke forth, clouding the cold air with his breath, his eyes like lamps. He leapt at his master, and snatched his sleeve with a frothing muzzle, pulling him away.

"Say now that I may go," the boy cried. "The enemy may already have taken fear, and be retreating as fast as his cowardly feet may carry him."

The long awaited shout drifted down the wind, and the pale moon shivered when she heard.

"Go!" granted the stern man.

"St. George!" yelled the maddened child, clutching at the hound's thick collar of fur. The cry had no meaning. It was but a shout of war, a valve to his passion. "On, Blood! St. George!"

At full cry they were gone from the moonlight into gloom.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SWORD IMBRUED

WHILE the pendulum of a clock might have swayed thrice, the four venturers stood facing Onawa as though her words had turned them into stone. Then Hough, forgetting all save rage and lust for vengeance, broke forward to reach the traitress. Instantly she ran for the bush, and the voice of Penfold called his follower back.

"Lift not your hand against a woman," he cried. "To the forest, my lads."

"To the forest an you will," Hough shouted. "I at least shall advance to smite this woman's partner in sin, be he Frenchman or devil."

"Be it so, neighbour," his captain answered. "Together let us stand, or together fall. Advance, then, and take the place by storm."

As they rushed out, La Salle braced himself to face the odds. He made a few passes to free his arm, and trod the beaten ground to make sure that it would not yield. Then, loosening the top bar, he flung it forth as the spidery form of Hough descended, and it struck before the Puritan's feet and stopped him dead. The same moment La Salle sprang upon the lowest bar, but the support weighed down beneath its burden, and his blade merely stabbed the air.

"A priest, neighbours," Hough shouted. "Now

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to avenge our martyrs burnt at Smithfield by Bloody Mary and the Pope."

Onawa, standing forgotten at the edge of the bush, cast around her a searching glance. The encampment of her tribe was far distant. The hound had gone out howling. Danger from that quarter was yet to come. She stood in shadow, the moonlight whitening the sand in front and darkening the shapes which hurried to regain their own. No eyes were upon her. She raised her left hand to her right shoulder and with the same ominous motion dropped upon one knee, falling unconsciously into the pose of a goddess of the chase.

The attackers hesitated, knowing the reputation of the man with whom they had to deal. To attempt to scale the palisade at that point meant certain loss, and they were not strong enough to take the risk. Hunted and hunters glared at each other over the pine bars. "Get you round, Jesse," whispered Penfold. "The dog is bold because he knows his back is safe."

Woodfield ran beneath the palisading to a place known to him, where he might scale the fence and so take the priest from behind.

La Salle detected the ruse and taunted his baiters in native French, while his keen eyes sought an opportunity to strike. He bent cautiously and gathered a handful of sand. Hough sprang upon the bars, and for the first time swords were clashed; for the first time also the Puritan realised the power of the priest's wrist. The point escaped his forearm by a mere margin, and La Salle laughed contemptuously.

"Brave Lutherans!" he cried. "Four soldiers

against a priest. Advance, soldiers. The point a trifle higher. The elbow close to the side. Now you stand too near together."

"Wait until friend Woodfield comes up," muttered Flower. "Then he shall laugh his last."

As he spoke there came a sound through the moonbeams, as it were the vibrating of the wings of a humming-bird, and to the music of this disturbance Flower flung up his arms with a choking cough and closed his sentence with a gasp of pain. His sword darted to the ground. He swayed to and fro, his eyes wild, his mouth open in a useless endeavour to appeal to his comrades, and then plunged down, like a man diving into the water to swim, and sprawled at their feet, with a rough shaft topped by a crow's feather springing from his back.

A cloud of sand stung the faces of the survivors, and before they could recover their eyesight, or awaken to the knowledge of Woodfield's approaching shout, La Salle was across the bars and bearing down upon them, his cold face branded with its mocking smile. He dashed their opposition aside, and turned, flushed with success, to renew the struggle, the taunts still ringing from his tongue.

But help was near at hand. Before the maddened and half stupefied Englishmen were able to move the night again resounded. Blood had scented the foe and could no longer be restrained. The priest wheeled round when he heard those howls, and escaped into the shadows with Penfold and Woodfield at his heels.

There was indeed one man, and he the most vengeful of his enemies, who might have outstripped

the priest, but it so happened that the long-striding Puritan had lost his reason. Obeying the first impulse, he pursued the traitress, mad to avenge the good yeoman who was stretched to his long sleep at the entrance to New Windsor. Nor did he realise his mistake until the shadow, after mocking him for a long mile, flitted into the unknown depths of the bush, and so disappeared.

"Fear not, masters," called young Richard, as boy and dog passed, running as freshly as at the start. "Do but show my father which way I have gone. Blood shall hunt the Frenchman down, and I shall slay him. I shall slay him, friends."

They swept on, flinging the dew across the bars of moonshine. That triumphant voice came back to the two men as they slackened speed for lack of breath: "I shall slay the Frenchman. I shall slay him, friends."

Penfold sank upon a bed of moss and panted into his hands. Woodfield stood near, his breath coming in white steam, his breast rising and falling.

"It is God's way, neighbour," he said gently.

The old leader's voice came in a sobbing whisper:

"Through the device of the devil, smitten down foully. . . . A man of few words, a good soul, with a smile for all. I knew him as a boy at home, a gentle boy, who would never join in stoning birds in the hedgerow or in killing butterflies, because, quoth he, God made them to give us song and happiness. And yet none quicker than he at ball or quintain, none braver at quarterstaff. Twice won he the silver arrow in Holborn Fields, and at home would lead his mother to church a' Sundays, and a' week-day drive

the horses out to field. A sober lad as ever sang with the lark beside our Thames. . . . An arrow in the back, an arrow shot by an Indian witch. It passes all. Call you that God's way? God wills a man to die in fair fight, with his death in front. And this! Oh, George! To fall like a beast hunted for the pot."

"Yet 'twas a soldier's end."

"Tell them not at home," cried Penfold. "Let them not know, if ever we see Thames-side again, how George Flower fell. Ay, like a flower he came up, and as a grass has he been mown down. Many are the wiles of Satan. The arrow that flieth by night, the coward arrow of treachery. 'Tis a foul wind that blows out a good man's life. He was a good man. His old mother, if yet she live, may look upon his past and smile. Such as George has made our England live. The strong oaks of the land. From treachery and sudden death, good Lord deliver us!"

"Amen, captain!"

"Where is friend Hough?" asked the old man sharply, rising and groping like one awakened from sleep.

"I saw him rushing into the forest as a man possessed."

"His zeal consumes him. I fear me while the madness last he will thrust his sword through that witch and so bring us to trouble with the Indians."

"She will escape from him in the forest."

"Bear with me," said Penfold brokenly. "To-night I am old. My leg pains me so that I may hardly rest upon it. What is here? See! Whom have we yonder?"

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The man of Kent came striding through, with the hot question : "Hast seen my son?"

As shortly Woodfield answered, and the knight hurried on without a word along the dim trail where the pursued and the pursuers had passed.

"I am but a useless hulk this night," groaned Penfold. "Do you follow and bring me word, while I stay to keep company with our George."

So Woodfield went. It was but a parting for the hour. He withdrew himself from his tough old captain and fellow villager, without a grasp of the hand, with no word of farewell, nor even a kindly look at the rugged features that he loved, never dreaming that he and Simon Penfold would speak again no more.

The knight, more skilled in woodcraft, proceeded faster than the yeoman. The clash of steel reached his ears against the wind, the wild bayings of a dog, and deep French accents mingled with shrill counterblasts in an English tongue. The shuddering forest became hideous, and the moonbeams came to his eyes red between the branches.

Man La Salle feared not at all, but the fangs and glowing eyes of the hound appalled. Any moment the brute might spring upon his back. He could not hope to escape from hunters who covered the ground with the speed of deer and might not be thrown off the scent. He stopped, breathing furiously, and set his back against a smooth trunk; but when his foes swept up, and he beheld the size and innocence of the sword-bearer, he laughed, even as Goliath laughed when young David came out against him armed with a sling and a few smooth pebbles from the brook.

"By the five wounds of God, 'tis but a child!" he muttered, as his breath returned. "May it never be said that La Salle ran in fear from a baby and a dog."

He smiled with compassion for the white face which became visible when a bar of light crossed it. "I will deal lightly with the child," he said, "but the dog must die, or he shall hunt me through the night."

"Down, Blood!" called the young voice; and the brute crouched like a tiger, sweeping the grass madly with his tail.

"He bears himself like a veteran," muttered La Salle, with a brave man's admiration for courage. "The pity that he is so young!"

"On guard, sir!" shouted Richard, stepping up with the challenge which his father had taught him.

"Back, little one," said the priest in his own tongue. "Put up your sword until you become a man, and return to your fishing-lines, and be young while you may."

The boy could not understand one word of the hated language. Saving his breath, he replied by springing forward, to cross swords with his renowned antagonist as confidently as on the former memorable night he had faced his father. A few passes, a turn or so, a quick lunge over the guard, a rapid bout of skirmishing high upon the breast, and the astonished Frenchman became assured that his youthful opponent was a swordsman almost worthy of his steel.

"By St. Denis!" he muttered, playing his sword from side to side with his inimitable sureness. "What wonder is this! Are these Englishmen soldiers from their cradle? A doughty stripling! He fences like a maître d'armes."

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But time was passing, others were upon his track, and, though La Salle was willing to spare, he knew that he was compelled to strike.

He stepped forward, closed with his antagonist, and by a deft turn of his iron wrist caught the boy's sword at the hilt and wrested it from his hand. Then he raised his point and lightly pricked the near shoulder.

"Go in peace, my son," he said in English.

That contemptuous manner, naturally assumed before inferior and superior alike, stung young Richard to the soul. He ran for his sword, while Blood sprang up with a deep challenge, and plunged after La Salle, who again had taken to flight. Richard followed at full speed, his blood boiling to avenge the insult to his knighthood.

"They come," said La Salle resignedly. "He must have the coup de grâce. Now God have mercy upon his infant soul."

He came in his flight to a natural opening, one half in deep shadow, the other lit by the parkling moon and carpeted by short grass. Columnar trees stood at regular intervals around this garden in the forest. A few night lilies opened their sulphur cups. The place might have been a dancing-ring for elves, and the priest crossed himself when he stopped, looked round, and swiftly wiped his sword.

"The turf like a rich cloth," he murmured. "The trees falling back, the moon soft yet sufficient. An ideal spot for sword-play. But methinks somewhat weird."

The peace of the glade was broken in a moment. Blood dashed out, his fangs bared, and made two

fierce bounds over the turf. La Salle fixed his eye upon a white spot in the underpart of the flying body, and at precisely the critical moment stepped aside, catching the hound upon his point and running him through from the centre of the white patch to the stiff hackles of his back. He turned sharply, lest his sword should break, and the dying body passed swiftly from his blade and crashed into the bush.

"When killing is too easy it carries the mask of murder," the priest muttered.

He turned again, for Richard was upon him with a sob of rage, and shouting: "Devil! You shall die for killing my dog, devil that you are!"

Aware that his time was short, La Salle parried the boy's wild lunges and replied by his own calculated attack. In that supreme moment of his life Richard fought, even as his father might have done, with strength, accuracy, and cunning manœuvre. The swords played together for little longer than a minute, and then came the *passe en tierce* outside the guard, which put an end to the unequal fight and left a body bleeding upon the grass.

A cry came from the forest, a near reassuring cry:

"Hold him out, Richard. On the defensive. Do not attack. Remember the pass I taught you."

The priest's eyes dimmed. Hastily he arranged the warm body, closed the eyes, straightened the legs and folded the stubborn arms, muttering a prayer the while.

"Heretic though you are, our Lady of Mercy may yet plead for you," he said; but his words were inaudible to his own ears, because of the shout which rang behind his shoulders:

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"Hold him off, Richard. I am with you. Keep your eyes upon his point. I am here."

As the bush gave before the avenger of blood, La Salle ran swiftly from that spot. And all the forest seemed to be moaning for the child thus cut down before he was grown, and the winds off Couchicing sobbed above the hemlocks, and the moon sank down as cold as snow, drawing the purple shadow closer to that white face and the straight, stiff limbs.

CHAPTER XII.

SPLENDOUR.

IN one short day the hand of fate had divided the little band of venturers, destroying the physical life of Flower, leading Woodfield into the trackless forest and losing him there, and driving Viner into the unknown country of the south. Viner's course, during its early stages, may first be followed, beside the lakes and across the thickly wooded plains of the land which was later to be known as the northern part of the State of Maine.

No event marked his journey during the first day. On the second he saw in the distance a party of Dutchmen, who also sighted him and gave chase; but the swift young athlete shook off these slow men with ease. Later he perceived the smoke of an Indian encampment, and bent off his course, fearing lest the tribe might be hostile to all of his complexion. By doing so he lost his bearings, and while attempting to regain them wandered at evening into a glorious valley, bright with flowers, and green with high grass undulating gently in soundless waves. Perceiving a line of trees beyond, Geoffrey determined to gain their shelter, and wait for the stars to guide him back to his southerly route.

He came to a shallow stream, a mere brook winding through the valley amid red willow and wild rice

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and fragrant beds of brown-topped reeds. A flight of swans passed overhead, their necks outstretched, their bodies casting gaunt shadows across the grass. On the near side patches of bush variegated the plain; beyond, the descending sun cast a dazzling haze. The wind was murmuring in the reeds, and the whistlings of aquatic fowl made a plaintive music. The lonely boy relieved his solitude as he walked, by reciting to the tune of the breeze one of the poetic fables he had learnt at school :

"And when he was unable to restrain his secret, he crept among the reeds, and murmured, ' King Midas has the ears of an ass.' But the reeds betrayed him. When the wind passed they bent together and whispered, ' Midas has the ears of an ass—the ears of an ass.' "

Stepping among the sedges, where single stalks shuddered in the cold water, Geoffrey looked for the ripple which would indicate a place of crossing. The reeds inclined their feathery heads towards him, and the malicious whisper seemed to follow, "Geoffrey has the ears of an ass—the ears of an ass." Laughing at the idle fancy, he ran on at the sight of a line of foam some little way down the stream. Drawing off his shoes, he passed across the yellow gravel, the keen water nipping his ankles, the reeds brushing his head. Old Thames had often been as cold, when as a school-boy he had waded through its weeds hunting the dive-dapper's nest.

Viner hesitated where the Indian trail split. That to the left ran into the sun. He could scarcely see it, so dazzling was the glory. That to the right was bare and cold, but leading, had he known it, direct

to the south. At the foot of a long bank the brook poured away its water, and above in the fruit-bushes the wild canaries sang away the hours. The youth took the bow from his shoulder, held it on end, and let it fall. The bow pointed as he wished, as perhaps his fingers had guided it at the moment of release. It fell into the sun.

A breath of fire was in the splendour ahead, an acrid smoke crept down, he heard the crackling of twigs. It seemed to the traveller that the sun was consuming the grove before him. A voice began to sing. Geoffrey tried to persuade himself that some little yellow bird was sitting in the sun-grove warbling its soul out to him. Then an envious night cloud swooped upon the lord of day and rolled him up in its dewy blanket, and immediately a palisade, a grass roof, and a thicket started out like black upon white. But the song went on.

A log-cabin stood right in the centre of the setting sun, a snake palisade winding around, enclosing also a garden bed with corn and potatoes, where already black and crinkled leaf pushed from the dark alluvial soil. Trees surrounded the house.

Amid the smoke the side of an iron pot showed at intervals. The singer held her head back, the slightest frown creasing her forehead. She was waiting for the fire to burn clearly, and to encourage it she sang.

Her hair, which hung all about her body, was golden-brown, no one tress the same shade as another, the whole a bewildering mantle of beauty. Its wealth became reckless when one crafty ray of sunlight eluded the cloud and shot across her head.

"Oh, oh!" she sighed, breaking off her bird-like song. "The sun will not let my fire burn, and—this wicked wind!"

The breeze, delighting to flirt with so glorious a creature, veered slyly, and fanned the bitter smoke around her. She danced away coughing, her cheeks scarlet, her red mouth gasping for pure air, her tresses gleaming in their mesh of sunlight. Her movements were as supple as the swaying dance of the pine-branch over her. She tried to laugh while she caught at her breath, and, failing, fell back panting, showing her tiny teeth.

Then the violet eyes moved along the path, and all the pretty laughter went out. A white hand drifted like falling snow, stole a tress of hair, and shining pearls began cruelly to bite the silk.

No maid could have desired a fairer vision.

Geoffrey, tall, slender, and flushed, stood between the tree and his bow in his hands, his Saxon blue eyes meeting the violet glances of timidity with free admiration. The maid of the fire-side beheld his clear complexion, his fair hair tied loosely at the nape of his neck, his strong figure; and as she watched for a few moments, which were not measured by time, her bosom began to rise and fall. Had she not prayed for such a vision? She had surely wasted her sweetness long enough upon the unsatisfying things of her daily life in that lone, hard land. There was that in her young blood which rebelled against her convent-like environment, where she had indeed her freedom, but where the tree of knowledge had not been trained to grow.

Viner stepped out and doffed his feathered cap.

"Fair mistress," he said, bending before this beauty of the grove, "give me your pardon for coming on you so suddenly. I am a traveller on my way to the south."

Madeleine Labroquerie answered him only with her eyes.

"Can you tell me how many English miles I am from Plymouth?"

He looked up, and learnt that the sun had not yet left the grove. He saw the cloud of hair waving iridescent. His gaze wandered over the beautiful head, until two eyes like purple iris flowers met his.

"But I am not English."

"Yet you speak in English," he protested.

"Why, yes. In England I was brought up. I love England; but I am French, and a Protestant."

Geoffrey looked into the grove as he spoke on softly, mindful of his duty:

"Tell me, lady, how many days must I travel before I come to the province of Massachusetts?"

Madeleine Labroquerie had not a word to say. This handsome stranger had hardly arrived, and already he suggested departure.

"I must not delay," he faltered.

"My fire!" cried Madeleine, stretching out her hands. "It will not burn. Stranger"—she turned to him with a winsome glance—"will you *make* my fire burn?"

She hurried to the smoking pile. He was beside her instantly.

"You shall not soil those hands."

"They are already smoked and soiled. And see—a burn!"

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Because Geoffrey dared not look Madeleine pouted at his back. Then she kicked the smouldering wood, and exclaimed spitefully, "There !"

"Your fire is too closely packed."

"It is not," she snapped, daring him with her eyes.

"You say it is not," he agreed ; but loosening the heap.

"I fear that it was," she sighed. "And the wood is damp."

Geoffrey rebuilt the fire, placing the hot embers to face the wind, and fanned the sticks until they burst into flame.

The daylight went out like a failing lamp, and a red glow flung about them as the fire increased.

"I know that you are weary, sir," said the girl winningly. "Let me lead you into the house and present you to my mother."

Seeing wonder upon the young man's face, she pointed her shapely hand through the smoke.

"Down there my father lies," she explained in a hushed voice. "Deep in the hollow where the beavers bite the bark at night. There the Indians made his grave. French though we are, the Iroquois have been friendly, because my father, who was a skilled physician, used them well. Here my father hid from the world. He found a rest here, and yonder he rests still hidden. I am with my mother and one native servant, who loves us because my father saved his life. And I—I have never known a friend."

"Lady," said Geoffrey suddenly, "I would serve you if I might."

"Rest you here a few days," she said quickly, "and tell my mother what is doing in the world."

"I must down to the coast."

"Did you say Plymouth just now? Learn how ignorant I am. I did not know there was a town of that name in all the New World. I have been to the English Plymouth. There I saw the brave ships in her harbour, and the red and white flags, and the sailors looking over the sea for what might come sailing by, watching thus and hoping all the day. That was a happy time."

"There are yet as good men in Plymouth as ever sailed westward from the Hoe," said the boy with eager pride.

While he spoke the expression on Madeleine's face altered. She drew away, murmuring as she moved, "Here is Madame, my mother." She added hurriedly, and as he thought with fear, "I pray you be gracious to her."

Viner turned, and there in the fire glow walked a little old woman in black, a white cap holding her thin grey hair, her face pale, her eyes sunken, and her colourless lips a tight line. She smiled coldly, and showed no amazement when her daughter presented the traveller.

"You are welcome, sir," she said in English. "We are poor and lonely folk left to perish in the wilderness. My husband was an atheist, a philosopher, and every man's hand was against him. He brought his wife and family to the New World that he might study in peace and learn somewhat of Nature's secrets. Last summer he was taken, babbling of the work of his misspent life, careless of our farewells, heedless of the state in which he left us. Philosophy is of a truth the devil's work, inasmuch as it hardens

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the heart of man, loses him his God, and wraps its slave in selfishness."

The old woman signed herself slowly; then suddenly pushed beside the traveller and snatched at her daughter's arm.

"Cross yourself, girl! Infidel, cross yourself!" she cried.

"Mother!" Madeleine shrank back, appealing with her lovely eyes.

"Lutheran!" screamed the little woman. "Make the holy sign, and so strive to save your wicked soul from the pit of destruction wherein your father lies."

"My faith is fixed," murmured the girl. "Ah, ah!" she panted.

Madame Labroquerie struck the girl thrice upon her fair cheek, staining the white skin red as a rose-leaf.

"Madame, forbear!" Viner stood between them, his blood hot with shame. "This is no sight for a stranger and a man to witness."

The little woman smiled at him and abandoned her daughter, who bent over the fire to hide her crimson face.

"You are English, sir. Your brave countrymen yield to none in their respect for a woman, when she be young and fair to see. Let her be old, they shall call her witch and fling her in the nearest pond. There be young witches, good sir, better able to seduce the soul of man than the old, though they keep neither cat nor toad, nor ride at night across the face of the moon."

Madame Labroquerie made him a low courtesy, and walked noiselessly to the gate of the palisade.

"That so lovely a daughter should be cursed with such a mother!" muttered the youth as he watched her go.

He came to the side of Madeleine, and found her crying.

"My mother has a strange temper. She has suffered much," the girl sighed.

There was a pause, one of those rare intervals when ears are opened to the music of the spheres, and souls may meet.

"You are not happy here," he said.

Her glorious eyes were two blossoms heavy with dew.

"Friend!" She put out one hand, groping for something to hold. "I am miserable."

They stood together, hand in hand.

"She struck you."

There was no answer. Divine pity dropped upon his heart, sweet and dangerous pity out of heaven.

"Stay a little," she whispered. "For the sake of your religion, stay. If for a day only, stay. Stay, for a woman's sake."

It was dark in the grove outside the circle of the fire. He drew at her fingers. He bent his head suddenly and breathed upon them. She placed her other hand—a cold little hand—upon his.

Then the evening breeze flung itself sportingly into the trees, and all the branches sprang before it, and the foliage danced and shouted in a laugh, singing noisily the old secret of the river reeds, singing, "Midas is a king of gold—a king of gold."

So the fire died down into an angry red, and all the birds of the grove were songless. Madame walked

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alone from the rude house, her small face white against dark clouds, and passed into the clearing. The Indian who worked for the widow and daughter approached with a burden of wood.

"Wind is coming," he said in his own tongue.

"May it blow away heresy and all heretics," muttered the little woman.

CHAPTER XIII.

ENCHANTMENT.

WITHIN the grass-roofed cabin another fire glowed, and beside it Madeleine entertained the guest, her white hands clasped upon her knee, her eyes lustrous as she listened to the tale of adventure which her young companion had to tell.

"And now you would reach the south and bring your countrymen hither," she said with the sweet practicability of her sex, after hearing his story of ventures both by land and sea. "You would win territory, perhaps fame. Then what would you do?"

"Then? Why, I would return home," answered Geoffrey.

"And then?" the girl pursued, the colour rising in her cheeks.

"Then I would fight for the king."

Madeleine sank back.

"Would your fighting-days never be done?" she sighed reproachfully. "Friend, the world gives better things than the sword. Think you," she went on hurriedly, "we are put upon this world to hate one another and be always at strife? Ah no. We are here to live! The soldier's day must pass, his arm grow stiff, and 'tis then he sighs for life—the sword gives only death. How wretched is that sol-

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dier's lonely end ! It is love in life that ennobles the body, and 'tis death in love that clothes the soul in its flight to God."

Her eyes had been fixed upon him. She cast them down suddenly and sat trembling.

"My father taught me the use of the sword, and explained to me the action of the gun," Geoffrey faltered. "He taught me nothing else."

"Your mother?" Madeleine whispered.

"She died when I was a child."

"She would have taught you. She would have told you to take the best," murmured the girl.

He could see only a rich coil of hair glowing in the firelight.

"But I am untaught," she went on. "My father was ever a stranger, my mother has never been a friend. I grew up with Jean-Marie, my brother, who was a follower of your creed. He too believed that life has nothing better than the sword, so went away to fight, and I have had no word of him again. Alone I have taught myself to live, to see that life is glorious, to find joy in drawing each healthy breath. I have studied the birds and animals, and spoken to them, until they have answered me so that I could understand. It is so magnificent, this life !"

A chill crept into the cabin and with it Madame Labroquerie, who peered at the comely couple, and said in her grating voice: "You are weary, sir. Daughter, show our guest where he is to rest."

With another courtesy to the Englishman the bitter little woman passed into her own room, and almost immediately the muttering of prayers and

clicking of beads disturbed the silence which her entry had created.

"Rest you here," Madeleine whispered, pointing to a palliasse partly covered by a bear-skin. "You shall sleep soundly I promise, for I have filled that palliasse with the sweet-scented grass which grows in yonder valley. May you rest there like Endymion, and may his dreams be yours."

"His dreams were of love—if the old tale be true," said Geoffrey, flushing at his boldness.

"Soft," she prayed, but she too had flushed. "My mother's ears are keen. God be with you, my friend."

"And with you also," he murmured, and raising her fair white hand he pressed it reverently to his lips.

No hostile sound disturbed the silence of the grove throughout that night, and Geoffrey made no stir upon his scented bed, until the sun streaming into the cabin and the noisy turk, turk, turk of the wild bush-fowl rendered further sleep impossible. Having performed the hasty toilet of that age, when by day and night a man had to be prepared to fight for his life, he went outside, and was straightway made welcome to the grove by a brilliant and versatile bluejay, which obtruded itself upon the stranger and with cheerful chattering friendliness volunteered to be his guide in return for a little flattering attention. But when Madeleine came out into the sun, the fickle bird deserted the man and paid court to the maid.

It had been Geoffrey's honest determination to proceed that morning upon his journey, but noon, and

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then evening, came and found him again a tenant of the grove. All day he and Madeleine wandered in the green valley, like children of innocence in a garden, the girl pointing out her favourite haunts, the flowery ridges where she would while away hours in day-dreams, and guiding him along faint paths which her small feet, and hers only, had trodden into being ; and as they so walked Geoffrey forgot for the time his mission, and became blind to the path of duty, because the spell of enchantment was over him, and all the world went far away while Madeleine was laughing at his side, and her sweet voice was in his ears, and her fragrant presence stirred before his eyes. No day had ever been so short, no sun more bright, no self-surrender ever more complete.

Again the grove was in splendour at the close of the day, and again Madame Labroquerie met her guest with a grating word of greeting and her bitter smile ; and again the laggard slept upon the scented couch and had his dreams ; and his dreams that night were not of power, nor of duty, nor of his harassed friends beside Couchicing ; but of shaded bowers, and green valleys, and love in life, and Madeleine. And once the girl cried out in her sleep, but neither her mother nor her lover overheard her unconscious utterance, " I cannot let you go."

But during the day which followed Geoffrey's conscience awoke and reproached him for this love-idleness, and as the evening of that day drew near his higher self conquered. Lying at Madeleine's feet, he told her with averted face that on the morrow he must depart ; and she merely sighed very softly and made

no answer, but longed in her heart that the morrow might never come.

Once again they returned to the grove, where Madame curtsied as before, and muttered to her guest: "You are welcome, sir. For the third time I bid you welcome to my poor home."

Her meaning was unmistakable, and the young man flushed hotly as he bowed in reply and thanked her for her words. More he would have said, but Madeleine touched him lightly and motioned him to keep silent. He turned and followed her to the hut, and they partook of food, and afterwards sat together and talked on, and yearned for one another; and in the meantime darkness fell, and the fire outside, which was maintained at night to keep wild beasts at bay, surrounded the cabin with a roseate glow.

Alone through that twilight Madame walked, muttering as was her wont, and started in superstitious terror when she saw a tall figure standing erect, spectral, beside the leaping fire. A few more steps and the Frenchwoman recognised a priest. She hurried forward, and a minute later genuflected to kiss the cloak of that man of blood, the Abbé La Salle.

In wonder the priest gave her the blessing which she sought and went on to question her. Eagerly Madame responded, telling him her name and circumstance, explaining her position, and mentioning her longing to escape from that lonely spot. Her desires were, like herself, made up of selfishness. She did not question the priest concerning the son

who had been driven out by her bitter tongue to join the commandant's little force; nor did she mention Roussillac's name, because—so entirely isolated was that shelter in the grove—she was not even aware that the man who ruled the land was indeed her nephew. But La Salle waived her petulant inquiries aside, and asked whether any Englishman had lately been known to pass that way. Then Madame shortly acquainted him with the coming of Viner.

"Bring me here something to eat," said the priest wearily, when he had obtained the information which he sought. "Afterwards I will rest me by this fire."

"Now the saints forbid," cried Madame. "Shall an infidel lie in my house, while a holy Churchman sleeps outside? Out the Lutheran shall go, and you, my father, must honour my poor home this night."

"'Tis not for me to provoke a quarrel," La Salle replied. "I may but fight in self-defence. Let me have food and a palliasse here."

Madame bent her grey head, and went to do his bidding.

The cabin was in gloom when Madame entered and passed through silently to procure food for the priest. Madeleine rose, seeking to be of service, but the grating voice sent her back to the fireside. Viner had also arisen, dimly suspicious. The girl's head reached his shoulder, and to put away the thought, which recurred more strongly when he noted her helplessness, he resorted to selfishness.

"Am I safe?" he asked.

Madeleine gave him a reproachful glance.

"My mother hates all Protestants. The heathen Indians are merely animals in her sight; but such as you and I are children of the devil."

"The fire beyond the palisade is burning more strongly," he said.

The door was open, and the glow entered the cabin like moonlight.

"It is to keep away the wolves. You do not suspect me?"

"No, no," he said, in a manner that brought a smile to her mouth. "For myself I care nothing, but I may not forget my comrades. I must be upon my guard for their sake."

The dame reappeared, a mantle over her shoulders and her hands. She smiled grimly, and gently addressed her guest:

"I have my birds to feed. They are the sole companions of my loneliness, and each night finds them awaiting me beyond the palisade. They are brighter birds than those of my country, but sadder because songless. The saints protect you, sir, in your sleep to-night."

"Shall I come with you, mother?" said Madeleine.

"Why upon this night more than others?" answered Madame bitterly. "Your way is never mine. When you shall learn to pray with me then you may walk with me."

She left the cabin, drawing the door close.

"Stay you here," whispered Madeleine, detaining Viner with a gentle hand. "There was that in my

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mother's manner which makes me fear. I will follow her and bring you word."

"I would not have you put yourself to danger."

"For me there is no danger."

"I go with you," he said.

"No!" cried Madeleine, stamping her foot. "You shall not."

He gave way and let her have her will.

When Madeleine returned with the tidings that a tall French priest was without, the young man's first impulse suggested that he should rush out and attempt to silence the spy, but prudence and a girl's hand detained him. For the first time Geoffrey shuddered at the thought of danger. With those two beautiful eyes watching him tenderly he felt that it was good indeed to live.

"I shall watch over you," said Madeleine's fearless young voice. "See, I will move your palliasse. Now this thin wall of wattles shall alone divide us. We shall be so near that I can listen to your breathing, and shall hear your faintest whisper. I pray you trust in me."

"In the morning I shall see you," he urged. "I shall not depart without thanking you?"

"Oh, talk not of the morning," she cried.

He seized her fingers, and when he kissed the hand it fluttered like a bird.

"I shall have my dreams," cried Madeleine, her face uplifted, and her eyes moistened. "And they may be so happy that I shall not wake. See! Yonder is my resting-place. The wattle-wall shall separate us. There my head will lie. Give me your sword."

She grasped the hilt, and thrust the blade through the trifling wall. Then she spoke with averted face: "When you are lying down to rest I shall tell you why I have done this."

They separated after a few tender words of commendation. The fire burnt down, and the north wind played roughly among the trees until the cabin hummed like a cave. Madame entered, as noiseless as a cat, and passed into her room. The rattling of her beads sounded at intervals, before sleep deadened the enmity of her mind.

"My hair is long," whispered Madeleine's sweet voice. "I am passing a coil through the hole in the wattles. Hold it, and if you hear disquieting sounds do not speak, but pull."

"I have it," he whispered, seizing the warm silk enviously.

"The holy *Madeleine* watch over you," she murmured.

"And you. For me, I am already protected by an angel."

"Angel?" she wondered.

"Sainte Madeleine is her name."

"Ah!" she said.

The sound of uneasy breathing arose between the groans of the wind. After a long pause Geoffrey spoke:

"In sleep I may lose what I am holding."

"Twist it about your fingers," said a whisper.

"Still, I may lose it. You will draw it away from me when you turn."

"Lie upon it."

"My hair is also long. I am tying yours to mine."

"I had thought of that," she murmured.

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Another period of silence. Then, in turning, Geoffrey's lips pressed upon the rich coil, and left it with a kiss. There came a little movement and an almost soundless whisper :

"Did you call?"

"You are not yet asleep," he reproved.

"I am watching and listening."

"I would rather you slept while I watched."

"Then I should be the guardian no longer."

"But always the angel."

The glow from without was still over the cabin where Madeleine lay wide-eyed. A spider let itself suddenly from the roof, and swung spinning in wild glee at the end of a silver streak.

"Friend," Madeleine murmured.

"I am listening," he said.

"There is a spider spinning from the cross-beam."

"Would you have me destroy it?"

"No. Oh, no! It is so happy in its life. I do not remember why I called you. I had something more to say."

"I shall not sleep until you think of it."

"Shall you go away in the morning?" she whispered suddenly.

There was no reply.

"And leave me?"

"The present is life," he reminded her.

"The thought of the future may destroy the happiness of the present."

"What would you have me do—obey my conscience or my heart?"

"Both," she sighed.

"Let us talk of it in the morning."

"Now. Oh, the spider is spinning faster—faster."

"The morning," he repeated.

"Now," she breathed. "But soft! Set your lips to this hole, and you shall find my ear."

A sound of restless movement came from Madame's room, and a grating voice: "From witchcraft, enchantment, and heresy our Lady and the holy saints protect us."

It was her lips that Madeleine placed to the hole in the wattle wall.

CHAPTER XIV.

FIRESIDE AND GROVE.

AMBITION and not chance had brought La Salle thus far from the beaten track. He had made it his policy to pursue the Englishmen in that land until he should have brought about their extermination, knowing well that any success in that direction would be rewarded by the richest gift which his master Richelieu had to bestow. From Onawa he learnt of Viner's departure for the south on the day following that venture against New Windsor. The girl had discovered the young man's track and gladly accompanied the priest, pointing out the trail, which was imperceptible to his untrained eyes, and so bringing him to the grove where Geoffrey tarried in the enchanted sleep.

After Madame Labroquerie had gone to find him food, La Salle reconsidered his plans by the light of her information. It was no way of his to hide his light beneath a bushel, and the slaying of Viner in that lonely country would, he reasoned, bring him little fame. If, however, he should return to lodge the information with Roussilac, all men would know of his agency. Therefore, when Madame returned, he impressed upon her the necessity of detaining Viner for at least three days within the grove.

"'Tis easy," the little woman muttered. "I shall be courteous to the young man, and praise his face

and flatter his pride. Madeleine, my daughter, shall do the rest. I warrant you he shall not stir from here till the soldiers arrive; and then, I trust, a stake shall be prepared and a goodly pile of faggots for the proper despatch of his heretic soul."

"I shall see that execution be done upon him," La Salle replied grimly. "Now get you gone, for I would be alone."

"Your holiness will remain until the morning," Madame prayed. "I would then make my confession, and receive the peace of absolution."

"Find me here at the dawn," La Salle answered. Then, uplifting his blood-stained hand, he bestowed upon her his benediction and sent her away.

Not fifty yards distant Onawa stood as a guardian over the man she loved, staring into the night, heeding every sound in the valley, dreading the approach of some emissary from her tribe. The maid had become an outlaw. Through her treachery the boy Richard, her own flesh and blood, had come to his death. With her own hand she had slain a man friendly to all her race. In the forest beyond the river a cruel death by torture awaited her; her own father would be the first to condemn her to the fire. She was thus compelled to stand or fall beside the priest whom she had aided with that disregard for self which has ever dominated a woman's actions.

As she stood watching the firelight and the grove, dim ghosts arose and began her punishment. She seemed to hear a sound of scuffling, and to see young Richard and his great hound, Blood, wrestling together, as they had been wont to do among the pine barrens, to the roar of the wind and the lost waters.

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Again she heard the boyish voice, gasping and triumphant, "I have beaten him again. I am stronger than he." And as she shivered, there came an echo of her own former words from the line of tossing trees, "He is brave and strong. He shall make a man before he has grown."

Beside the fire La Salle slept, lulled by the wind. He knew Onawa was acting as a guard over him, else he had never dared to close his eyes. Yet his rest became presently broken into by spiritual beings hovering around in the grove, anxious to point out his future. The chafing of boughs, the beating of leaves, the gnawing of the beavers around the philosopher's grave, with more distant sounds from the country beyond, were the media these beings employed. The disturbances passed into his ear, which pressed upon the palliase, and entered the torpid brain to make a dream.

Through the unlighted streets of a city a way was revealed before the sleeper by means of lightning flashes. No fellow-creatures were in sight, and yet the tongues of a multitude shouted as he ran, bells clashed above, and trumpets blared below. Before him a vast square opened, empty and wind-swept, and here the shoutings of the unseen mob became terrific, here also a mountainous building rose into the clouds, and midway upon a flight of marble steps sat an old man in white, crowned with the tiara, extending a red hat towards the yelling solitude. The dreamer rushed out to seize the prize; but between a principality and power, as represented by the scarlet blot rising in the gale, the silent lightning cut, and between this fire and Urbano the Eighth a

figure descended, and the lightning was a sword, which his untiring arms flashed between the aspirant and his soul's desires. "Cardinal-Archbishop!" cried the white figure. "Bought by blood!" outcried the man in black, and his sword turned all ways in a flame of fire.

La Salle awoke with a shudder. That figure seemed to be upon him, bending, holding him down with the hands of Briareus. Casting off the terrible sleep, he started upright. A face was indeed over him, and arms were dragging at his shoulders. The wind-tossed grove cleared, with its fire glowing, and sparks flickering like a thousand eyes, and the sleeper awakened recognised Onawa, who was summoning him to action in her unknown tongue.

"Perdition!" he muttered. "The witch haunts me like an old sin."

Onawa went on pleading, pointing wildly at intervals down the wind.

"You shall lead me into no more death-traps!" the priest cried.

The frightened girl brought a knife from her side, and made as though she would stab him. Then she pointed again, and, falling to her knees, indicated her own tracks.

La Salle peered along the glow of the fire and beyond where the sparks were beaten back, then rose and approached the palisading, Onawa clinging to him like a shadow. There was no danger there. He advanced to the wattled door, prepared to receive an attack. When there came no response to his unspoken challenge he turned back, and Onawa again pointed along the way she had come.

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"Would to God I had spared that child! His face is there!" the priest shivered.

"Tuschota!" cried the girl. She touched the ground, resting him with her eyes.

A smothered cry broke from the lips of the priest. Onawa followed his gaze, which went, not along the trail, nor into the fire-lit grove, but above where the eastern sky had almost cleared of drift.

"A portent," moaned the priest. "'Tis the end of the world, and I am armed with the sword drawn in my hand."

There was war in heaven. Across the plane of eastern sky hung a wild picture of forest and rockland where pigmy men rushed together without shock, where spectral weapons fell silently, and shadowy smoke burst and rose. Tiny figures climbed a cliff, and similar grotesques fought on high and pressed them back. The combatants appeared ant-like and ridiculous objects as they swayed reflected upon the floor of heaven.

Onawa watched the spectacle unmoved. She had witnessed the mirage before, and by this present vision merely understood that an attack upon the citadel was even then in progress. As the weird picture broke up and scud came flying across a faint grey sky, she prayed in her treacherous heart that the French might win.

La Salle rose with some shame when he perceived that the sky had resumed its normal aspect, and light at length dawned upon him as he sighted a shadowy being stealing within the radius of the fire.

"Tuschota!" warned the voice at his side.

The priest knew then that Onawa had saved him

from the knife which would have avenged the half-breed boy, who had flung himself with such desperate courage upon death. Casting away the arms which encompassed him, he passed swiftly into the shadow of the grove, while Onawa advanced boldly and met the woman she had wronged so grievously, and dared to face her without shame. For a space they stood, gazing at one another by the firelight, until the younger cast down her eyes and began to shiver with the coldness of fear.

"Approach me, sister," said the stern woman. "There is a question I would have you answer. Refuse you dare not, for we are flesh and blood; we are daughters of Shuswap the truthful, and the same mother gave us birth. I seek not to know what brings you here this night, but tell me now have you seen that proud priest who has slain my son?"

"I have not seen him," cried Onawa fiercely; but she was cold to the heart beneath the gaze of those colder eyes.

"'Tis well. A daughter of the Cayugas lies not, save to an enemy. But why do you slink thus away? You do not fear me, sister?"

Onawa stared aside speechless.

"After I became wife to the great white man you came often to our home among the lost waters," Mary Iden went on. "My Richard loved you. Remember, sister, how often you played with the child, how many times you carried him in your arms, and told him the old stories of our race. Hast forgotten how he would laugh at your coming, how he would run down to meet you with a gift, and draw up your canoe and bring you to our shelter by the hand? Re-

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member when he had committed a fault how you pleaded for him, calling him *Dear child* and *Sunlight of the camp*. Sister, I know that you grieve for the boy."

Chilled at her words Onawa passed to the fire, turning from those pursuing eyes.

"I shall not forget how Richard loved you. When you need me, sister, come, and I will give you your former place beside the fire. So shall you rest and forget the strangers in this land. By the love that you bore for my boy, sister, I will not forget you."

Onawa looked up and saw only the figure of La Salle emerging from the grove. Her sister had drawn back into the night.

The gale circled the embers in whitening eddies. Onawa wildly snatched a stick and raked the glowing fragments into a pyramid, upon which she flung some roots of willow. A yellow fog ascended, torn hither and thither by the spirits of the wind.

She crept to La Salle's feet and fawned upon them. He spurned her and still she struggled to approach, to cling as the weed upon a rock. She had made the sacrifice of her life that she might serve him. She had discharged the arrow to slay the Englishman solely that she might win his love. She had relied upon her fierce beauty, her youth, and her strength to conquer the handsome Frenchman. She had staked her all upon her heart's desires.

And now he flung her from him, and strode away from the fireside and the grove.

She followed, crying along the wind. He motioned her back and even threatened with his sword, but she pursued, setting her feet in the marks

which his had made. When he halted for weariness she stood near to guard him from her sister. When the grey day came she still followed him, across open country, and so northward into the hills, and towards the river, where the wind contained a breath of smouldering bush.

CHAPTER XV.

GLORIOUS LIFE.

WHEN Madame found La Salle gone and the fire black in the early morning, she frowned until her eyes became hidden and went back to the palisade, passing her old servant, who was shredding ears of wild rice. She entered the windy house calling. Soon she came out, shaking a willow stick in her angry hand, and stopped opposite the old man, who continued his work, grumbling softly to himself, "Ah, Father Creator! Father Creator! Why do you send this north wind in summer time? The day is dark and cold. Send us the west wind, Father Creator."

"Have you heard noises in the night?" Madame's voice grated.

"I slept with the wind in my ears," answered the native.

"Have you seen my daughter, or the young Englishman?"

"I have seen the light struggling to break, and the grey heaven rushing, and the thick wind beating. I saw a red fox run and a blue-bird chattering across the wind," said the old man.

"Have you not seen the priest?" urged Madame.

"I was up at the dawn," replied the stolid worker.

"The fire was dead and the sleeping-place white with rain. A bear was seeking warmth upon the embers."

"I have been blind and deaf," cried Madame in a rage.

At the first glance of light the cabin was as noisy as an ocean cave. Madeleine's brain became too active for sleep when she knew that the day was at hand. She rose softly, glowing with her new-found happiness, and as she stirred she murmured the intensely human line of that unhappy boy Kit Marlowe, who had perished in a tavern brawl a few years before her birth, "Whoever loved that loved not at first sight?" She darted up with that thought, but a coil of her long hair tightened, and there came a startled movement from beyond the wall.

"Hush!" she whispered, lifting a pink finger, forgetful that he could not see.

"Is it the day?" said Geoffrey.

"Yes, yes. Release me. Let me fly. Do you not hear the wind?"

"I am listening to you," he answered.

"Forget me. Listen! That was like thunder. Are you listening?"

"I am coming out with you," he said.

Reaching the open, Geoffrey discovered Madeleine, her arms outstretched, her hair rising in ripples above her head as she bathed in the wind, battling and panting, her lovely face all heather-pink.

"I can smell the pines," she gasped, "and the salt sea, and the mountains. I can hear the roaring of water and see the soaring of eagles. Oh, oh!" she panted. "It is glorious to live!"

She cried as she drew him away impetuously:

"The black priest has gone. Let us hope that he has been blown away into a swamp, where the fairies

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shall bewitch him into a frog to croak at the world for ever. Come now away. Tell me whether you had dreams in the night. But stay!"

She drew away from him suddenly.

"Madeleine!" he exclaimed, wondering at her changed face.

"I must remove this mask," she cried in a stately fashion, frowning and placing her hands upon her sides. "Sir, who are you that you should strive to win the heart of Madeleine Labroquerie? Why, I have sworn to wed a knight, a man of title and estate, and you, a smooth-faced boy, with long hair and cheeks as pink as mine, you come and speak to me of love. Sir, how dare you thus to use an innocent maid?"

She passed on ahead of her astonished lover and the trees of the grove closed round them.

"Madeleine——" he began, protesting.

"Madeleine," she imitated. "Here is free-speech indeed. Now, sir, stand and let me show you what you are. You are an Englishman, an adventurer, one of a small band who think themselves strong enough to attack the power of France in this new land, and you, the enemy of my people, come to me with a tale of love, believing me to be a maid of the wilds to be won and cast aside at will. Speak not to me. I will not hear you. I am no simple provincial maid that I should fall in love with a soldier's handsome face. Last night, yes, last night, after an acquaintance of but three days, you dared to own your love, and to humour you—in truth I was afraid—I confessed that I also loved you. I, a French girl, such a traitress as to love an enemy of my people! I was but fooling

you. How I laughed to myself at deceiving you so readily."

She laughed disdainfully and curled her lovely lip.

"I fear I have already tarried here too long," was all that Geoffrey could say.

"Stay one moment," cried the haughty beauty. "I should be base did I not warn you. Soldiers are waiting for you upon every side. East, west, north, and south they lie in wait for you."

"There are no soldiers nearer than the fortress," said Geoffrey wildly.

"You may believe so," replied the traitress. "But you have learnt little of this country if you do not know that military posts are set about from place to place. One such post is near at hand, and thither I sent our servant after your coming. Can you not perceive that I have betrayed you?"

Had Geoffrey looked he might have seen her shiver as she spoke.

"I thank you for your warning, but I may stay no longer," the young man said, and he stepped away with his head down.

"Which way do you take?" she demanded.

"I am southward bound."

"You are—brave, friend."

"Friend!" he exclaimed, with a sobbing note of indignation. "Would you have me trust in you again?"

"I had forgot," she admitted. "Are you going now?"

He moved on through the grove; but he had not made a dozen steps before she called to him.

"Have you, then, no word of farewell?"

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He turned, but did not look at her as he said :
"May you live to fortune and a happy future."

"You said you loved me," said Madeleine, her figure drooping. "Why did you deceive me?"

"I loved you," he said hotly, moving back a step. "And I love you still. When I first saw you standing by the fire with the sun falling on your head I loved you. When I have left you I shall see, not the girl who desired to betray me, but her who gave me this to hold for my protection while I slept."

He drew forth a long coil of golden-brown hair and held it in the wind.

"You cut it off," she faltered. Then her manner changed again. "Throw it down. Stamp upon it. Tread it into the ground."

"I use it," he said, "as I longed to use you." And he put the lock back into his bosom.

At that she ran forward with the cry : "You love me. Take me there, Geoffrey. That is my place. I will not be held out. Geoffrey, I love you. Oh, blind, blind ! I love you with all my heart and soul."

She tried to force herself into his arms, warm, loving, and irresistible.

"I am the wickedest of liars," she breathed, twisting her fingers within his. "I would not have gone so far, but I thought that you knew. I thought that you feigned to hate me in return for my cruelty. Ah, Geoffrey, I loved you when first our eyes met. I did so desire your love, but, sweetheart—foolish, credulous—I—I feared you might think I was won too easily. Will you value your prize the more, when I tell you that my treachery, the story of the soldiers, the settlement?—Oh, oh !"

He guessed what she would have said, and so had seized her.

"Betray you, blind love!" she whispered. "Dear foolish sweetheart, I would open my veins and give my blood for you. How I tortured you! Knowing what a cruel nature your love possesses, knowing it, can you still love her?"

"Madeleine——"

"Stop," she entreated, lifting her violet eyes. "Repeat that name a hundred times, and find for it a new attribute of love each time. But let the first be false and the second fair."

"Sweet Madeleine!"

"Call me so, Geoffrey," she murmured. "And I shall not wish to change."

There was a hill beyond, its sides covered with bleached grass, and above a few gaunt pines beating their ragged heads together and stabbing one upon the other with jagged arms where limbs had been amputated by previous storms. To this place Madeleine led her lover.

It was a strange day. Though long past sunrise there was barely light. The clouds swept low, grey or indigo masses rushing south with the speed of rapids. The dark, solid wind of the lowlands came in a furious succession of great waves. The lovers might have been upon an island with the ocean roaring round in storm. Out of the gloom the wet rocks glimmered and the trunks of long-fallen trees described weird shapes upon the plain.

"This is life!" cried Madeleine. "Glorious life!"

Geoffrey held her closely, looking down upon her wet and radiant face.

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"We can fight together, you and I," she went on. "No wind shall conquer while we hold together. It may roar at us, but we are young and strong, and the wind is old and worn. Think you that you can bear with me always? I promise you I will never use deceit again. We shall be together when the winds have all passed under heaven, and the trees are gone, and the seas have dried. Our souls will live in the same life and the same love. Together while the old world crumbles, and the sun becomes cold, and the moon fades. There is no death. We shall close our eyes one day and change our home. Life will run on for us, the same magnificent life of love."

"There is no death," he repeated, as though the idea had not occurred to him before.

"How many thousand years has this wind rushed upon this hill? How many thousand shall it beat after we have changed our home? We are made to live, Geoffrey. It is not we who are sick, not we who are oppressed. We are made of stuff that does not perish, not flesh and blood which wither, but breath and love. Kiss me, Geoffrey, kiss me with your soul."

"Sweet, you have more knowledge than I," cried Geoffrey as he kissed her eyes.

"See that huge cloud! How the monster wishes to smother us! There it rushes, flinging its rain to spite us."

"I shall see this wild spot for ever," he murmured.

"In years to come," said Madeleine, "a city perchance may grow in this solitude, and where we now sit a palace or a cathedral may be built, a king may command, a pastor teach his people, bells may ring

for Christmas, and heralds sound their trumpets. But we shall not see that city, my Geoffrey. We shall look below the brick and the stir of people, and we shall see a hill of white grass with old pines atop, and below streaming rocks and decaying trunks, with beyond a grove all covered in damp gloom and lashed by wind."

"I can see the faces of my friends," he muttered.

The girl turned upon his shoulder and drew his face lower with her cold hand, lifting her own until their eyes met.

"Look there," she entreated. "Tell me what you see."

"Heaven opening." He paused. "I see also my duty to my neighbour."

Madeleine's head drooped. Presently a small voice whispered out of the wind, "I would have you obey that message, lest by offending God we wreck our happiness."

"I live upon your will."

"You must leave me. You shall not see me shed a tear. But I must have you for this day, and afterwards"—she caught her breath. "Had ever a young soldier so brave a love?"

He kissed her hands, and her cold face, and her hair, which dripped like seaweed.

"No ifs," she implored, when her ears caught his broken words. "The doubter fails. Look upon the deed as done, and God shall pardon the presumption, because He was once a young man upon earth, and He knows the longing of a brave heart. Already I think of you, not as going forth to duty, but as returning to claim me for your bride."

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"I shall succeed," he cried, in a voice which defied the winds. "Madeleine, you have made me strong. Listen, sweet. I have a home in Virginia, most fair, they say, of England's colonies, and I come to take you there. I have a house in a garden where the sun never sets, and where a river runs gently to the sea between banks of flowers. There is no hard winter or rough wind there, neither enemy nor noise of battle to terrify your dear heart. There the potato grows, and the white tobacco blooms scent the night, and there the voice of Nature sings of peace. Will come with me, sweet?"

"You have learnt your lesson," she sighed, content.

Misty rain smote them, but they strained at each other and laughed at it. The cold numbed their feet, but their hearts were so warm that they did not heed it. Nature thundered at them, but the roar of menace became a triumphal march, and the shriek of the fiends a benediction.

"This one day you shall spare to me," said Madeleine. "Let us spend it as a day to be remembered. I have a cave down yonder, around which I have trailed the bushes and taught ivy to grow. There we will build a fire and I will be your housewife. Come! let us run along the wind."

He bent to assist her, and she feigned to be stiff with cold, the lovely traitor, so that she might feel his arms about her. Hand in hand they ran, the rain and wind driven upon their backs, the angry sky lowering upon the two who thus dared to endure the perils of life so happily. But the lovers knew that behind the damp gloom and the storm smiled the

kindly sun ; and they knew that he would conquer in good time.

So that happy day drew to its end in mist and rain, and the wind died down, and the storm clouds went out of the sky one by one. The moon broke wanly into light and a pale star of hope gazed serenely down. Nature wearied of her tumult, and old Æolus drove the turbulent north wind back into its cave and set his seal upon the mouth.

Geoffrey and Madeleine stood struggling to part. There was no tear in the violet eyes of brave beauty as she looked up smiling, dwelling always upon the future to sweeten the bitterness of the present. "Love must be tested," she murmured with her radiant philosophy. "Hearts must be tried. Geoffrey, I love you."

"Madeleine, I love you."

She stood alone, swaying weakly, her face as pale as the moon. Then she laughed to drown the beating of her heart, threw out her hands, and ran breathlessly up the hill where the ragged pines merely nodded, and down into the plain towards the grove, crying to the solitude :

"Life is glorious—glorious !"

CHAPTER XVI.

CLAIRVOYANCE.

WHILE Geoffrey Viner was winning the love of Madeleine Labroquerie, and escaping the snare which La Salle had contrived for his capture, history was being made around the river and the heights. The priest's daring venture into the forbidden country acted upon the tribes of the Iroquois confederacy as a spark upon gunpowder; and when it became known from one camp-fire to another that George Flower, and Richard, son of Gitsa, had fallen upon Cayuga territory by the hand of a Frenchman, the native stoicism was changed into madness and the signal for a general uprising went throughout the land. It was the eve of that great assault upon the French position which lives in oral tradition among those degraded descendants of a once great people who occupy the maritime provinces of to-day.

Previous to that struggle, one phase of which was shown through the portent of the mirage to La Salle while he stood in the haunted grove, many deeds occurred which the chronicler cannot afford to pass over. The narrative must therefore be resumed upon the second morning following the dispersion of the venturers, that morning which saw Mary Iden set forth on her mission of vengeance, and Oskelano returning to his fastness in the north to prepare his men for battle.

The sun had fought down the mists, and black craft of the fishermen were already leaping along the river, when Van Vuren abandoned the fortress and climbed the cliff, hoping, as every day he hoped, to find some trace of his missing men. The night had been cold with north wind, and the rock country was still haunted with wet and flickering shadows. One shadow, so dark and angular as to attract the Dutchman's eyes, lurked under a crag, as a patch of sheltered ice might linger in the midst of a land steaming with sunshine; but when Van Vuren approached, this shadow moved and took upon itself a semblance of humanity, and with the dispelling of the illusion the Dutchman beheld the evil face of Gaudriole.

"Adversity finds hard resting-places, my captain," said the dwarf, as he crawled forth. "Your rock makes a bed rougher than a paving-stone, but methinks a safer. Here a rogue may snore in his sleep without bringing the king's men upon him. I have a message for you, my captain."

"Hast any tidings of my men?" asked the Dutchman eagerly.

The head of the dwarf was on a level with his elbow; his matted hair was wet with mist. His habiliments, partly native, partly civilised, surrounded his crooked body in a ragged suit of motley; and a long knife was driven into his belt.

"He who answers must be paid," answered the hunchback, grinning.

"Perchance you have already been paid," said Van Vuren suspiciously.

"The honourable captain possesses the gift of divination," sneered Gaudriole. "See you how low

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yonder warship sits in the water?" he went on, pointing down at the *St. Wenceslas*, which had lately arrived at that coast. "Is it true, as I have heard the settlers say, that she is loaded with gold from the shore of Labrador? 'Tis said that a man may there see the precious metal shining at his feet, and has but to bend to gather sufficient for a knight's ransom."

"I pray you give me the message, good dwarf," said Van Vuren flatteringly.

"The cloak upon my captain's shoulders is of a truth a thing to be desired," Gaudriole went on, fingering the rich stuff with his grimy fingers. "Were it upon my back, 'twould handsomely conceal some very clumsy work of nature. 'Tis the cloth that makes the courtier." He burst into a raucous laugh, as he danced the cold out of his limbs.

"His Excellency the commandant shall loosen that insolent tongue," cried Van Vuren hotly.

Gaudriole snapped his fingers in the Dutchman's face as he retorted: "This is not the old world, my brave captain, and there is no restraint upon lying here. Gaudriole is now a citizen of the New World. The Cardinal himself is but a shadow here. Even a mountebank of the gutter may turn traitor in the wilderness. Gaudriole is a man this side o' the sea. Were we in Paris I might bow to kiss your garments, and call you Holiness an you desired it. Here the jester is as good as the general. Hunt me into yonder forest at your sword-end, bold captain, and bid me play the will o' the wisp. I should but disappear into a thicket ahead, rise up at your back, and this knife and a moss-swamp would settle all your busi-

ness. Doff your hat to a fool, captain, and give him pipe and tobacco."

Van Vuren clenched his teeth. He would then have given even his cloak to effectually silence that biting tongue. But he was a stranger upon French territory, and he knew that the slender tie of alliance would not stand a strain. He prudently choked down his anger, and satisfied the dwarf's more reasonable demand.

"Never was a better gift sent to man than this same tobacco," said Gaudriole. "See you, captain, how excellent are its qualities. It shall manage the warrior beyond the arts of woman. No man shall use the good smoke in anger, because at the first taste peace settles upon his body and his soul desires to be alone. But 'tis a dangerous drug upon an empty stomach."

"The message," said Van Vuren impatiently.

"Yonder comes in a good burden of fish," resumed Gaudriole, gazing down indifferently to indicate a boat grating across the shingle. "I know the oaf, one Nichet, who at home had not the wit to make a living. Here he becomes a man with a name. This land is Paradise for those not wanted across sea. Nichet shall presently leave his boat, to find himself a stone to anchor her, and then I shall pass that way and take of his best fish for my breakfast. The knave profits by the fool's work. Fare you well, brave captain."

"The message, villain," broke in Van Vuren.

"Ah! I grow forgetful. 'Tis said that the Abbé La Salle is to go from here to the land which the Scotch discovered and the valiant French took from them, to that country upon the gulf which we call

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Acadie. A happy quittance, say I. The abbé is too perilously apt with his long sword. Let them send the fat pig Laroche after him, and this fortress shall grow more peaceful than the streets of Versailles. Let there be trouble, you shall always find a fat priest at the root of it."

"Let La Salle descend into the bottomless pit," cried the Dutchman violently. "And Heaven be praised if he drags you down with him. Deliver me the message, hunchback."

"Now Nichet moves away to search for a fitting stone," went on Gaudriole. "Had I a message for you, captain? Let me consider. My memory is weak of a morning." He struck out his long arm suddenly. "Dost see that man signalling from yonder shore?"

Van Vuren turned quickly. "Where?" he exclaimed.

"This is the message," shouted Gaudriole, and as he spoke he rushed under the Dutchman's arm, and shambled swiftly down the road. "To the man who has to live upon his wits the Dutchman is a gift from Heaven itself. Remember, my captain! The tobacco leaf is a brave cure for ill humour."

Van Vuren hurled a curse after him, and turned to ascend. From the summit of the heights he scanned the prospect, and quickly learnt what Gaudriole might have told him had he exercised greater forbearance. The expedition had at last returned. Almost as soon as Van Vuren looked out he heard a welcome cry, and presently perceived a figure, clad in the distinctive dress of Holland, crossing the valley at a rapid walk. With an exclamation of relief the

captain hastened down, and met Dutoit, his lieutenant and the leader of the exploration party, upon the plain.

Hurriedly the survivors collated their gloomy experiences.

"Twenty-eight left of our seventy-five," muttered Van Vuren, when he had heard Dutoit's report of two men lost and one dead of fever, "our supplies and ammunition gone, our ship destroyed. We have nothing now to hope for, except a safe passage home. Hast seen any Englishmen?"

"Yesterday we sighted a spy making south, and him we pursued until he escaped us in the bush," answered Dutoit.

"These men never recognise defeat," went on Van Vuren. "They shall spread upward from the south, flow into this land, and push the French back from fort to fort. They have a wondrous knack of gratifying the savages. Know you if any new expedition has come over?"

"We came upon a man mortally sick, who babbled as he died about a ship supplied by the woolstaplers, which started from Bristol some nine months ago and was lost upon the reefs. This fellow had his face set due north, and believed that he was traveling towards Boston——"

"Who comes here?" cried Van Vuren, breaking in upon the other's story with a note of fear.

They saw the tall, stern figure of Mary Iden descending towards them, armed as for the chase. She crossed the ridge and halted when she sighted the men. Her face was ghastly, and her eyes roved wildly over the prospect. Presently she put out her

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hand, and the Dutchmen waited when they saw her sign:

"Soldiers," cried a wild English voice, "have you seen the French priest known as La Salle pass into the fortress?"

Van Vuren, who had touched at most of the New World colonies in his time, knew the Anglo-Saxon well enough to answer; but he started, and said bitterly to his subordinate:

"The very savages speak English. Where is the Indian who has a knowledge of French in all this country, which the French rule? Did not I say to you that it is as impossible to keep the men of King Charles out of this land as it is to dam the ocean behind a bank of sand?"

He turned to the Englishman's wife, and demanded further knowledge.

The woman struggled to return the answer which policy advised, but passion overmastered her. Her eyes flashed wildly as she answered:

"Your race has ever been friendly with mine. 'Tis true you are foes of the English, but all nations hate England, even as the birds of the forest hate the eagle because of the strength of his flight. Soldiers, show me where I may find this priest. I have walked through the night seeking him. But a few hours ago I was a mother. To-day my son gives no answer to my voice. He was a great hunter was my son, though but a boy, and he feared no man. This day we bury him where the waters shout. He was good to look upon, he was strong like the young bear. He had brave eyes. Soldiers, it is the priest who has slain my son."

The anguished woman had spoken thus aloud as she walked through the cathedral-like aisles of the forest, addressing the columnar pines, the fretted arch of foliage, the dim bush shrines; so she had called as her heart bled to the climbing tits, the ghostly moths, and the long grey wolf as he slunk away.

"Who is the father of your son?" pressed the Dutchman.

Awaking to the consciousness that the question was not wholly dictated by sympathy, Mary Iden drew herself erect, and, pointing over the heads of the men, indicated the impregnable heights whereon waved the flag azure a fleur-de-lys or, that emblem which dominated the land from the islands in the gulf to the country where the foot of white men had never trod.

"I have learnt the story of the wanderings of the children of England," she said in a strained prophetic voice. "Of the journey of the man Cabot, who passed into the places of wind, into the great sea of ice, and reached the land where the Indians dare not walk. Of the seaman Frobisher, who touched the iron coast and lived. These men passed out like spirits into the unknown, and came back with their great story as men restored from the dead. As the crow follows the eagle, to take of that which the strong bird leaves, so Frenchmen followed the great adventurers of England. And now I see the French driven from their fortress, from Tadousac and St. Croix. Those who dwell in Acadie shall be driven out, and go as exiles into a strange country. I see soldiers sweeping the great cliffs, freeing the valleys and plains. I see the

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French settled upon their farms, and their flag no longer shines in the sun, and the people bend themselves to the rule of an English Queen, whose name is Victory and whose reign is peace. Many moons shall come and go, many suns shall heat the Father of Waters before these things shall be, and I shall not live to see that day." She pressed her hands to her aching eyes, and shivered as she swayed, and once more cried : "Soldiers, have you seen the priest who has slain my son?"

"A witch!" exclaimed Van Vuren hoarsely. "Let us escape before she overlooks us."

The superstitious Dutchmen hurried out to rejoin their men, who were camping in the forest; while Mary Iden made her way across the plain, and so into the great red eye of the sun.

CHAPTER XVII.

STAMEN.

THAT knowledge of forest-craft, which enables the traveller to guide his feet unerringly through pathless bush, was only in rare instances acquired by the New World venturers, and then only after years of hard experience. When Woodfield abandoned his captain to follow the career of Hough he struck indeed in the right direction, but the native trails were numerous, and along one of these the yeoman went astray. By seeking to set himself right he became hopelessly lost in the labyrinth of the forest; and at last succumbed to weariness and stretched himself to sleep upon a bed of moss, until a ray of sunlight stabbed through the dense roof of foliage and smote him across the eyes.

Woodfield arose and looked around in sore perplexity, knowing not which way to turn. The globes of dew gleamed in opal tints upon the grass, the big robins passed wreathed in filmy gossamers, the earth smoked with mist and thrilled with the voice of the glad west wind. But all the beauty and peace of nature combined made no satisfying meal for an empty body. Trusting to Providence, Woodfield started out afresh, and walked strongly for many hours, but always making direct north and away from the camping-ground of the Iroquois, away from Couchicing and the little settlement upon its shore.

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The yeoman tramped on, until exhaustion came upon him. All around the great white pines lifted two hundred feet in height, interspersed with dazzling spruce and gleaming poplars. He smoked to still the pain of hunger, but the strong tobacco made him dazed. He staggered on, and presently heard the voices of approaching men. The trail bent sharply. He passed on, with half-opened eyes and wildly throbbing brain, went round the bend, and started suddenly as from an evil dream. Half-naked bodies and painted faces closed round him in a clamorous ring; and Woodfield awoke fully to the knowledge that he had fallen into the hands of the Algonquins.

With an effort he drew himself upright, and gazed bravely at an old warrior with flowing hair, who nodded and smiled at him in a not unfriendly fashion.

"J'ai faim," the adventurer muttered, trusting that one at least of the braves might understand the French language.

It was the wily old fox Oskelano who confronted the Englishman. He stretched out his hand—the etiquette of handshaking he had acquired from his visit to the fortress—and articulated with difficulty:

"You . . . French?"

Woodfield grasped the brown hand and nodded violently.

"Necessity makes hypocrites of us all," he muttered for the satisfaction of his stubborn English conscience.

Oskelano grinned amicably and gave an order to his men; and straightway the warriors closed round and escorted Woodfield to their camp, every step

widening the distance between him and his companions. They gave him food and drink; they provided him with a shelter; they built a smoky fire before him to keep away the flies. Finally Oskelano himself came, accompanied by his brother, and the two squatted gravely at the entrance to the bower and scrutinised their captive with pride and interest.

"Um," grunted Oskelano, after a long period of silence.

"Ho," muttered the weary Englishman with equal gravity.

The French vocabulary of the Algonquin chief did not extend beyond the single word *diable*, a word which he uttered constantly in his subsequent efforts to converse with his guest, without any understanding of its meaning, but believing, since he had heard it issue with frequency from the lips of the soldiers in the fortress, that it was an expression of possibilities. He endeavoured to convey by means of gestures that it had come to his knowledge that the Iroquois were about to attack the fortress at the instigation of the English. His spies had seen a messenger bearing the symbol of the headless bird. They had also observed the general movement eastward of the tribes. The gods had provided him with a rare opportunity for attacking his enemy. He was the friend of the great French people—he slapped his insidious old heart with his treacherous hand—he was eager to fight for his allies, and in return he doubted not that the chief far over seas, King Louis to wit, would graciously send to his good Algonquin friends many of the magic fire-tubes, with an abundant supply of that unholy admixture of saltpetre, sulphur, and char-

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coal which possessed such a wondrous property of exploding to the physical detriment of a foe.

"Diable?" he grunted, staring eagerly at Woodfield.

"Oui," answered the harassed Englishman, though in truth he had understood nothing.

"Um," grunted Oskelano; and there the interview ended, with nothing gained on either side.

But as the chief returned to his skin-hut, his brother, a sachem wiser than he, made the disquieting assertion: "The white stranger is not of the French tribe."

"How know you so?" cried the perturbed chief.

"He does not lift his hands, nor does he shake his shoulders when he speaks. He sits without motion. He does not laugh. He is one of the race they call English."

Woodfield ate the strong bear-meat brought to his shelter by a silent giant, and turned to compose himself for sleep; but the giant touched his shoulder and made a gesture which there was no mistaking. The Englishman rose, and immediately two other figures glided out of the forest and cut off his retreat.

They led him along a trail where the fireflies were beginning to light their lamps, between the big trees, and out into short bush and sage-brush where the cranes swept overhead, crying mournfully. Rockland appeared presently, streaked granite overrun with poison-ivy. The captive noticed that the rock was fretted with caves.

Into one of these he was ushered by the custodians, who then gravely divested him of his weapons. A fire was lighted near the mouth of the cave, and there

the bronze guardians squatted, maintaining an intolerable silence throughout the night.

A change of sentries took place at daybreak ; another at mid-day ; a third the following nightfall. Food and drink were handed in to the prisoner ; but the guards spoke never a word and made him no sign.

Another day went by, but as the time of evening drew near there came the sound of camp-breaking down the wind. A host of armed men tramped beside the cave. A group of doctors, attired in the fantastic mummery of their craft, followed ; and last of all came Oskelano and his brother side by side.

Around a solitary poplar men were at work, chopping down the brush with their tomahawks. The guard stepped up upon either side of Woodfield, who watched these preparations with a prisoner's suspicions, and led him out to the cleared space.

"Um," grunted Oskelano, and shook hands amiably with his victim.

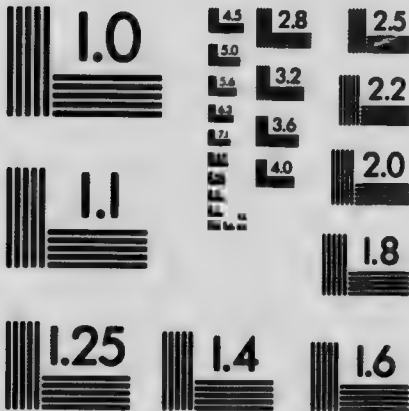
Then the men put aside their tomahawks and bound him to the poplar with ropes of vegetable fibre. They piled the moss around him and flung the sagebrush atop. Others brought up pine branches and piled them waist high. Oskelano watched, his crafty face wrinkled with smiles.

At last the Englishman understood that he was about to be made a sacrifice to the fierce Algonquin gods. He uttered no useless prayer and made no cry. "They have spared me the torture," he muttered bravely. "Let me now show them how to die." As the silent and supple natives worked around him, he recalled the tales that old men at home had told him, of the Protestants who had died for their faith, laugh-



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ing at the flames and bathing their hands in them. The last scene in the life of the old vicar of Hadleigh had often as a boy moved him to tears. He remembered how that the old man had lighted from his horse to dance on his way to the stake, and he recalled his noble words of explanation: "Now I know, Master Sheriff, I am almost at home." The passing into death through fire was merely a sting sudden and sharp.

Water was dashed over the fuel until the pile gleamed frostily in the fading rays. A fiery death for his captive was no part of Oskelano's plan. He had discovered that suffocation was more effective and less rapid than the flames.

Tree and victim became soon hidden in a dense column of cloud, the doctors resumed their march, the guard followed, the two sachems brought up the rear, discussing their proposed attack as indifferently as though that mighty pillar of smoke pouring upward in the still evening air out of the plain of sage-brush had no existence in fact.

Well-laid as was the cruel Algonquin's plan, he had not the wisdom to guard against that element of the improbable which rarely fails to enter into, and mar the working of, the best-contrived plot.

A maid had concealed herself in the bush until the camp became clear. Then she came forth and ran like the wind, but stopped upon the plain with a cry of terror when she beheld an old man, who hobbled painfully through the brush. The ancient turned, suspicious of every sound, but when he saw the girl his dry face broke into a weird smile.

"Hasten, child," he quavered, leaning heavily

upon his staff. "The Mother of God forgets not the good done by man or maid."

He dropped a knife at her feet. The girl caught it up and sped onward like a deer.

The old man was a Christian. The maid was heathen. Old mind and young working independently, the former actuated by the religion of altruism, the latter wrought upon by nature, had entertained in secret the self-same plan of rescuing the young Englishman from his terrible plight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COMMITTAL.

WHILE Woodfield was a prisoner in the camp of the Algonquins, his comrades, who had searched for him in vain, made their sad parting from George Flower upon the Windy Arm where the waters mourn for ever.

This promontory had been so named by the Indians because it thrust itself far out, like an arm, into Lake Couchicing, meeting the full force of every wind. It made a suitable spot, thought the survivors, for an Englishman's grave, being rough and rugged and strong to behold, like the man whom they had known and loved and lost.

When Hough had done droning his prayers, they heaped the soil into the form of a mound, which they covered with warm peat. While thus employed they beheld Shuswap passing down to the beach, where a dozen long canoes lay ready for a start. One, which was covered with green branches, had already been launched, and was rocking gently upon the shallows. The Englishmen hastened to complete their work, when they discovered that the sachem was awaiting them with impatience.

Then a mournful procession crossed glass-like Couchicing, headed by the sad canoe where boy and hound slept together as they had been wont to do at home. It reached the fringed shore opposite, amid

the sorrowful cries of the paddlers. The canoes were carried across the strip of land and down again to the water where the country was in splendour. Here Nature struck no mourning note. Only a few stripped trees leaning out, held from falling by tougher comrades which supported them on either side, spoke mutely of the presence of death after life; and even so showed strong green saplings from some living nerve of the half-decayed roots to proclaim the final triumph of life over death.

So they continued, until wild islets stood out, their banks humped with beaver mounds, and the lost waters began to shout with the mourners, and the swelling north wind shook the shore. The paddlers wrenched the canoes round, chanting as they worked, and the whitecap waves slapped the frail birch-bark sides.

No man stood beside young Richard's grave. A flock of noisy birds pecked amid the fresh-turned soil and flung themselves away before the carriers. Sir Thomas took no part in these last rites. From that pierced body of his son the jewel of great price had been snatched, and the setting he left for others to handle.

The mother stood beside old Shuswap, her bosom heaving vengefully as the warriors consigned her son to the ground. After the heathen rites had been performed, Hough's stern voice repeated the prayers which he had recently offered over his brother of the sword, and when he had done green branches were flung into the grave, then a weight of stones, and finally the rich, red clay stopped the mouth of earth which had opened to devour her own. The

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Indians swept away, shouting a song of war. The waters raced on; and wind and rapids met below with the noise of thunder.

Penfold walked among the trees; and there, scarce a stone's cast from the sounding water, he came upon the knight, huddled upon the stem of a fallen pine, his hands spread out across his knees, his head down, and on the ground between his feet the two parts of a broken sword.

The old yeoman came near and wrecked the silence by a gruff word of sympathy; but Sir Thomas did not look at him. Presently he made a blind movement and extended one lean arm towards the ground.

"If you would serve me, friend," he said in a hollow voice, "cast these fragments into yonder water. My son, whom I should have trained as a man of peace, took that sword from my hand. My Richard's blood lies heavy on me now."

"Not so," said Penfold strongly. "The boy was his father's son. Would you have seen him grow a weakling? Sons bred beside an enemy's camp must fight or be found unworthy of their name."

"The sword has fallen," said the knight. "Last night I had a dream." A shiver coursed through him. "Take up the sword with which I killed my son and bury it in the water. I have sworn to lay hand on it no more."

"I have lost a friend," muttered the yeoman. "One known to me by hearth and in field, at work and pleasure. I have buried him this day in a strange land. I grow old, and my friends drop from me as acorns shed from the oak, but while my eye is steady and my arm strong I shall fight for England's

empire over sea. Old age, when dotage grows, is time sufficient to mourn for friends. While strength remains a man must work. Country, then friends, myself the last. 'Tis the motto of the Penfolds of County Berks."

"You have no flesh and blood to mourn."

"What is relationship if it be not friendship? Know you not that two brothers may fall in hatred from one another, and yet either have a friend dear to his heart as his own soul? Our troubles we carry to our pastor. Our highest love to the woman who stays for us on our way through life. Such friendship binds more firmly than any tie of blood."

"Speak not to me," cried the bitter man. "My ambition has fallen to the ground."

"Stand by yonder mound," cried Penfold. "The boy shall speak."

"Vengeance shall not bring him back."

"Had you fallen he would have gone upon his way stronger than before."

"He was young and I grow old."

"Yet I am older far." And the yeoman shook himself like an old lion. "There is work for me."

The knight lifted his head, and spoke more bitterly:

"Poison stirs in our English blood, driving us from home, leading us across seas to fight unthanked for our country's cause. What gadfly of madness stings us on thus to build the foundations of Empire? What honour shall be rendered to pioneers? Who shall seek our graves and pause to say, 'Here lies one who fought to plant the red-cross flag in the face of its enemies'? Fools, fools, fools! We forsake

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home and kindred in pursuit of a dream, rise up for our unrewarded effort, and fail. So we are gone and our deeds lie buried in our graves."

"One leaf makes not a summer," replied Penfold. "The one cannot be discerned by the eye, and yet that one does its share in making the tree perfect. We also have our part to play. Our lives are obscure. Our deeds shall live, if not our names. Let others reap the harvest."

The knight rose, frowning at the sun-lit scene.

"There is a cave a league away," he said. "There sorrow and myself shall dwell. Seek not to find me."

He placed a hand upon his breast.

"Something has broken there," he said; and then went with drooping head, striking the trees in the blindness of his flight.

Hough stood low upon the shore between the islets. He heard the footsteps of his captain, and spoke:

"See where our friend's wife goes. Closing her ears to my good counsel, she went into the hut, and returned with bow and arrows and a knife. These she placed in her canoe, and yonder she goes to find the track of that papist priest who has brought sorrow to us all."

"Said she as much?"

"Ay. 'Onawa, your sister, has brought this trouble upon you and us,' said I, as she pushed away. 'She it was who smote down George Flower by treachery, and she it was who brought the Frenchman to our hiding-place.'"

"Said she anything?"

"Never a word. But her eyes strained upon the knife."

Then the two lonely men returned to New Windsor, the slow day passed, and night enwrapped in cloud fell upon the land. The fires of the allied tribes spotted the forest with scarlet, and between the black trees the upright figures of warriors, fully painted and feathered, crossed as they threaded the mazes of the dance. Five thousand fighters were there gathered, the best and bravest of the Oneidas, Senacas, and Onandagas, mad to avenge their wrongs. Spies were posted at every point; a hundred watched the fortress, passing the word from man to man. In a chain they stretched from the height above the river to the council fire, where the nine sachems sat muttering in whispers and drawing omens from the flight of the smoke and the burning of the logs.

"Shuswap, great chief of the Cayugas, the woman your daughter would speak to you," a voice sounded.

"Let her come near," answered the old man.

His keen eyes distended. He had looked, prepared to behold his younger daughter, but instead his eyes fell upon Tuschota, her sister. The father noted her warlike bearing, the bow slung upon her shoulders, the arrow in her hand, the knife thrust through her girdle. He saw also the sternness of her countenance.

"What would you say, daughter?"

"Where is Onawa, my sister?"

"I know not," said the sachem.

"Find her and bring her forth. She led hither the Frenchman who has slain my son."

The sachems turned and their black eyes glittered upon her.

"It is false," cried Shuswap.

"She desires to win the French doctor for hus-

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band. She brought him therefore to the lake that he might lie in wait to kill the Englishmen. One man Onawa killed with her own hand. My son is your son. Your daughter, my sister, must die.'

She spoke, and passed away into the glow of the forest.

Shuswap dashed his grey head to the ground.

"She must die," muttered the counsellors.

The news travelled like an evil wind from fire to fire. All the tribes swore by their gods that the woman who had sought to betray them must die. Not till then might Shuswap lift up his head among them. They danced more cruelly, saddened by disgrace.

A runner came from the depths of the forest, spots of blood thrown from his flying heels. Three hours had he run at that speed. He passed the warriors and their fires and reached the council. All the sachems sat erect, save only old Shuswap, who lay forward, his head upon the dust.

"Oskelano comes upon us at the head of the tribes of the Algonquins," spoke the messenger. "They carry the fire-tubes given them by the French."

The sachems sat like figures of stone.

"Which way do they come?" demanded Piscotasin, surnamed Son of the Weasel, the learned chief of the Oneidas.

"From the north."

"They shall find us ready."

The messenger passed back. Straightway the forest shivered with a wild cry for battle until the leaves were shed like rain.

There came another runner.

"A fire-boat passes down the Father of Waters."

"It is well," said the Son of the Weasel. "It is the signal of the friendly Dutch."

Thereupon commenced that great advance of the confederate tribes which descendants speak of to this day. The flower and strength of the Iroquois, that great people which from time immemorial had ruled the north-eastern land from the coast to the chain of inland seas, went out to avenge their wrongs. The women rushed to find shelter from their hereditary enemies the pitiless Algonquins. The army poured away in a roaring torrent, draining the forest, leaving the fires licking the sharp breeze with forked tongues, leaving only one man behind :

Old Shuswap, doubled in the dust.

CHAPTER XIX.

ENKINDLED.

THE raft of fire, which had been reported to the sachems as visible upon the river, had indeed been ignited and started upon its course by the hands of the Dutch, but without any idea of signalling to their allies. The man who was chiefly instrumental in giving the signal, which Van Vuren had arranged for in the time of his power, had never heard of that secret conspiracy which the action of the English venturers had brought to nought.

Because the captain shrank from introducing his party into a camp friendly only in name, where friction between his men and those of Roussilac might have occurred, the Dutchmen bivouacked upon the outskirts of the forest, and while darkness surrounded them sat smoking solemnly and chatting, altogether ignorant of the contemplated native rising. These men were of all ages and drawn from almost every station in life. The most prominent character was one Pieter von Donck, an elderly sailor of immense bulk, attired in the shapeless sack-coat, white tucker, and immense knee-breeches of the period. This man, so report went, had touched at every known harbour in the world, had explored many an unknown tract of country, and was as well acquainted with the streets of New Amsterdam, its double-roofed church, its battery upon the hill, its toylike windmills, and

its gallows beside the wharf, as with the old-world town of Holland on the arm of the Zuyder Zee. He had been sent out with Dutoit to act as guide for the expedition, and it was well for the lieutenant that old Pieter had been with him, otherwise the entire party must have been lost. Von Donck was very nearly as skilful as an Indian in picking up a trail, and to his more unenlightened comrades his knowledge of locality savoured of witchcraft. Van Vuren and his lieutenant were conversing at a little distance from the big circle, the former frequently consulting a scrap of vellum covered with names and lines, the first map of the great eastern coast which had ever been designed.

"Yonder is a mighty precipice," observed presently one of the youngest of the soldiers, nodding his head gravely in the direction of the heights. "How the folk at home would marvel, could they but see what we look upon daily in this land."

"What say you, boy? What say you?" cried Von Donck, aroused from his musings by this criticism. "What! call you yonder hill a precipice? How would you name the cliffs of Jersey, had you seen them as I, Pieter von Donck, saw them from the ship *Goede Vrouw*? Should you but cross the expanse of Tapaan Bay, as I have done, should you enter the defiles of the Highlands and see the wigwams of the Iroquois perched among the cliffs like nests of eagles, should you see the black thunder-clouds chasing the hobgoblins among the Kaatskills, as I, Pieter von Donck, have seen them, then methinks, boy, you might sit among old travellers and talk to them the night."

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The old sailor's voice was thick, and he snorted like an ox between his words.

"'Tis given to few to venture as you have done," spoke a conciliatory voice from the circle. "Tell us now somewhat of your journey up Hudson's River, good Piet."

"A weird river, they tell me," said another voice.

"True! true!" snorted the voyageur. "A river of ghosts and devils. A river which changes the flow of its tide 'gainst all nature. A river which shoals or deepens in an hour, to hold the explorer back, or to lure him into the heart of a storm. 'Tis a river which few dare to tempt. But I, Pieter von Donck, went up it under a master who, despite his English blood, was the bravest man upon this earth. Ay, but I saw even his cheek whiten, when we reached the whirlpools at the end of the known world, and yet saw no sea ahead."

"Who was that master?" asked the young man who had opened the conversation.

A derisive laugh sounded, followed by Von Donck's booming reproach:

"Young man, have you no pride in the doings of the great? Hast never heard the name of Hendrick Hudson?"

"I knew not that you had been with him," muttered the youth.

"Before Marie von Toit, your mother, was weaned I crossed the seas," snorted the old man, smiling into the fire. "What Dutchman has not heard of the ship which brought me over, the *Goede Vrouw*, which lies as I speak a-rotting within the wooden harbour of New Amsterdam? San Nicolas

was her figure-head, the good saint who guided us through all perils, and to whom upon landing we erected a chapel within sight of the sea. He is the patron of our first settlement in this new world, and shall remain so for ever. Now they call him Santa Claus, and the children of New Amsterdam hang up each one a stocking in the chimney-side on San Nicolas' Eve, for the good saint is a lover of children, and rides that night over the houses, his wide breeches filled with gifts, which he lets fall down the chimneys and so into the stockings hung to receive them. All the city is a-laughing with children on the morn of San Nicholas' Day."

"Gives he then nothing to the elder folk?" asked one.

"'Twas once his custom to do so, when he could find an industrious body who spoke no evil of his neighbour," said Von Donck. "But he has much ado to find such now."

"Didst ever see the storm ship upon Hudson's River?" a listener demanded.

The old sailor pulled himself round to face the speaker.

"What story is this?" he muttered.

"There is a ship which haunts that river and comes a-sailing by night or day, running 'gainst both wind and tide, her deck crowded with Dutchmen who neither move nor speak. She comes before a storm, and goes while men gaze, like a flash of light."

Pieter von Donck grinned.

"Will call me a phantom, brave boys? Here you shall find enough sound flesh to make two men as good as any," he said, slapping his mighty thighs.

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"That ship is surely none other than the *Half Moon* herself. Know you not that Hudson and his crew haunt the Kaatskills? O' nights the good ship, which lies sunken at the end of the world, rises, and the ghosts of my master and my mates pass from the phantom deck to their revels within the mountains, and back ere morning to their graves. Peace be to them, brave fellows all !

"Twenty-nine years past," Von Donck went on, in his strident voice, which brought Van Vuren near to listen, "we cast away from our new city on the island, and sailed westward to discover the overland passage to China. In a day we had left the land of the Manhattoes far astern, and with a favouring breeze had run under the palisadoes, a wall of rock, young friend, which makes yonder height seem to my eye no greater than an ant-mound. The solitude unmanned all, save Hudson, who walked the deck, swearing that he would reach the sea if he had to explore till Judgment Day. Awful was that silence when our ship entered the shadow of the Highlands, where the falling of a rope upon deck broke into echoes among the hills, and over the river came a noise as of demons laughing. The terror of the New World was upon us, and when we sang our chanties, heaving the lead or drawing in sail, we would fain have stopped our ears, so terrible were the voices which answered us from the shore."

"Was there no talk of turning back? "

"There was no turning back with Hendrick Hudson. He strode the deck day and night, and at his every order the black rocks pealed and the precipices sbrieked, though the weather would be calm and the

wind not more than a whisper. We held on our course until a storm seized and flung us upon the shore; and there we made landing, in a place where snakes darted their heads at us, and having built us a fire under the basswoods, cooked food and dried our clothes.

" 'This mountain country is the place for me,' cried Hudson. 'Here might we spend a free life, my sailors, hunting by day, and at sport by night. Bring out our pipes and liquor from the ship, and in this hollow let us rest until the storm clouds pass.'

"So we remained there three days, chasing bears by light, spending the dark hours around the fire, smoking our long pipes, and playing at bowls, the favourite game of our master; and the mountains thundered, and the goblin voices shrieked with every gust of wind. A fearsome place, that dripping rock-forest at the end of the world. Upon the third night came Indians to our camp, two sachems old and cunning, who demanded by what right we had brought ourselves into their land. I can see the face of Hudson now, with its straight black beard and hard black eyes, and the angry twitch of his mouth, a trick of his when crossed, as he answered them. 'We are Dutch,' quoth he. 'And if there be any new passage across this world Dutchmen shall find it.' Then the sachems came down from the rocks, and cursed him and his crew, swearing to call up spirits of river and wind which should fight against our ship. Hudson threatened them with the sword—there was methinks too much hot English blood in our captain—and the next day we remanned the *Half Moon*, and sailed away against the stream.

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"A wind struck us, and the horse-shoe which had been nailed to the mast before starting dropped with a fearful clanging upon deck. We sang the hymn to San Nicolas, and fastened the horse-shoe anew, but again it fell. The Indian spirits were making mischief in the wind. The day became dark; the sun went out; but Hudson bade us cram on sail, because every hour he looked to hear the roar of the sea. 'And then for China, my men,' cried he.

"We ran into whirlpools and cross currents, and the *Half Moon* struck full upon a rock in the middle of the stream. The water roared around, and I swam for my life through darkness, seeing no man, dreading every instant lest a hand should seize my heel and drag me down. I reached the shore, and there found a companion, who had saved himself as I had done. Of our ship and mates we could find no trace, therefore we set out together, and made a great journey overland, until by the grace of God we saw the tower of the church of San Nicolas lit by the morning sun, and the good folk of New Amsterdam coming out to greet us as men brought back from the dead."

Von Donck drew a flaming stick from the fire and relighted his rolled tobacco leaf. A circle of solemn faces was set towards him.

"The *Half Moon* yet sails upon Hudson's River," remarked the sailor who had questioned the voyageur concerning the storm ship. "She rides out of a thunder-cloud, her sails flying against the wind, the men staring over her side. One Sunday in the morn, when the folk were at church and the dominie was preaching—such is the tale I have heard—there

sounded a mighty wind, and the building grew creeping dark. Upon that a man ran in, crying, 'A ship! A Dutch ship sailing by!' The dominie and all ran into the gloom of mid-day and saw a vessel riding against the tide, full of men in wide breeches and sugar-loaf hats, with faces as white as wool. Some of the bolder youths manned a boat, and rowed out signalling, but the stranger gave them no heed. Sometimes she would appear so nigh to them that they could mark the flakes rotting from her beams and the weeds trailing round her bows, and the same minute she would appear as though half a mile away. And while they still rowed after her, they heard a noise as of iron ringing upon her deck and straightway she rode into a cloud and vanished. And afterwards came a great storm which wrecked close upon a score of houses."

"The old ship," muttered Von Donck, his eyes astray, his cheeks less ruddy than their wont. "'Twas the sound of the horse-shoe falling to deck which the rowers heard. Hudson swore in the face of Heaven that he would make that passage. Mayhap he still strives, the storm holding him back from the unknown north-west for ever."

As the old sailor ceased to speak Van Vuren advanced, the strip of vellum between his fingers, and stood a sharp figure in the firelight. The men ceased their mutterings and leaned forward to hear what their leader had to say.

"Our expedition upon this land has failed, my men," he cried. "Our ship lies burnt, our comrades are lost, we are not strong enough to withstand the French. Shall we now make a journey through the

unknown land, and so down to our own free colony, through which pours Hudson's river, of which I have heard you speak? Let us strive together to gain the island of the Manhattoes, where our city of New Amsterdam smiles upon the sea."

The Dutchmen did not break into a shout as Englishmen might have done, nor did they raise a noisy chatter after the manner of the French. They looked on one another with grave faces, and each man puffed his smoke more heavily. Finally old Pieter von Donck snorted and spoke:

"I have played the pioneer before to-day, captain. 'Twould gladden my eyes to see again the tower of San Nicolas by the sea."

"Then let us away before morning," said Van Vuren.

Boats of the fishermen were drawn along the white road of shore, and these the Dutchmen requisitioned for crossing. They worked warily, fearful of seeing the flash of torches along the path beneath the cliff. The river brimmed and the stream flung down with a ceaseless undertone.

"What have we here?" snorted Von Donck, while he groped under the gloomy wall.

A number of dry logs, crossed and pinned together by wooden wedges, lay upon the gravel spit, piled with dry grass and resinous boughs interlaced. Beside were lengths of pine to act as rollers for launching. The mass of inflammable material rose high. Torches were pressed between two stones beside the logs.

"'Tis but the raft made to give signal to the Iroquois tribes," explained the lieutenant.

"To the water with it," cried a voice.

"Peace, fool. The French have sentries posted."

"Fire it," snorted Von Donck. "Let not so much good work be spent in vain. Will float it upon the French man-o'-war for a parting message."

Eager hands set in place the rollers, and soon the unwieldy mass grumbled riverwards. It nosed into the water and settled with a splash, riding deep because the logs had weight. Flint and steel struck, a shower of sparks rained upon the catch-fire, the torches were ignited. At a word the grass flared, and the raft, released, struck upon a rock, turned slowly, and raced down stream, a red and yellow sheet of fire under a whirling canopy of smoke, straight for the lantern which marked the presence of the man-of-war.

"To the boats!" whispered Van Vuren.

A cry was raised above, and soon the answering voices resembled a chorus of daws frightened round a dark steeple by the shadow of a bird of prey. While the Dutch were floundering in mid-stream a brass gun thundered. The column of fire swept on, illuminating the seamed wall, and throwing into black contrast the trees on the opposite shore.

As the laughing Dutchmen reached land a terrific din from the hemlock forest shocked the night, and this wild revelry became each moment more terrible, until the wind seemed to cease to breathe.

The raft was opposite the landing-stage, burning rapidly down to the water, casting out flakes of fire and wisps of blazing grass. Lights flashed confusedly upon the heights, and the tramp of armed men carried solemnly across the river.

"The Iroquois are coming out!" cried Van Vuren.

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"Let us wait like vultures for the pickings," muttered the lieutenant at his side.

"Vultures!" shrieked a malignant voice. "A good word, traitors."

The men swung round and stared into the gloom. Upon a point of rock they saw Gaudriole, squatting like a toad, his features half lit by the glow of his pipe.

"The plain of Tophet lies ahead," he snarled at them. "Others may play at fire as well as ye."

He sprang up and danced furiously upon the rock.

"Slay me that hunchback," shouted Van Vuren in a rage.

His men ran at the rock. Gaudriole spat at them like a cat and vanished among the scrub.

A wave of smoke fanned over the ridge. A deep glow, waving up and down like a red rag, grew along the southern sky, advancing storm-like, deepening in colour.

The bush had been fired.

CHAPTER XX.

SACRAMENTAL.

THE military routine of the fortress continued that day as usual, and the approach of night brought no suspicion of the forthcoming assault. The absence of La Salle was alone commented upon, yet without apprehension, for the priest was notoriously lax in the performance of his ecclesiastical duties, and only Laroche was seriously troubled in mind for his brother priest. Roussilac indeed breathed more freely when La Salle was not present in the fortress. At eventide two little bells rang out, that to the east of the citadel being the bell of the chapel of Ste. Anne, presided over by the junior priest, St Agapit, that to the west the bell of Ste. Mary Bonsecours upon the hill. Here Laroche, in the absence of La Salle, officiated to recite vespers and hear confessions.

Laroche, though a fighting bully lacking in every priestly quality, was, among the soldiers at least, more popular than St Agapit. The latter was a scholar, a man too learned, and somewhat too honest, for his age, an ascetic, and a priest in every sense. It was well known that he looked with a stern eye upon drunken brawls or vengeful threats, whereas Laroche, himself a brawler when in his cups, judged such offences leniently. St Agapit had no ambition, apart from the faithful performance of his duty, the

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carrying out of which rarely brought him into even remote contact with either of his colleagues.

It was good to feel the cool breath of the evening after the heat and burden of the afternoon. The little stone church of Ste. Mary upon the brow of the hill darkened, and an aged crone passed into the sanctuary to light the strong-smelling lamps. Laroché entered to recite vespers, and rolled away to divest his great body of cope and alb; but as he appeared again within the church his eyes fell upon some half-dozen men, who waited to obtain an easier conscience by confession of their sins.

"A plague on ye," the priest grumbled as he stumbled into his box. "Why are ye all such miserable sinners? Ha! is it you that I see, Michel Ferraud? What sin now, you rogue?"

The keeper of the cabaret in the Rue des Pêcheurs fell straightway upon his knees, and began to whimper:

"The former wickedness. I am driven to the act, my father. Wine is scarce, as your holiness knows, and great is the demand therefor. I must eke out the supply against the coming of each ship, and it has ever been but a little aqua puralis added to each keg; but to-day, father, the devil jogged my elbow, and that which is blended cannot be separated. The wine remains a rich colour, holy father, as you shall see, and now you shall know——"

"Ye and shameless sinner that you are," the priest interrupted. "To dilute a wine which is already too thin to gladden the heart of man and make him a cheerful countenance—to do so, I say, is to commit a most deadly sin."

"Exact not so heavy a fine as at last confession, good father. Would not have me close my tavern? The wine is a good wine," Michel added professionally, "and the little water added is methinks an aid to virtue."

"Art so fond of water?" replied the confessor grimly. "Water you shall have. Go down now to the river, swim across, and return in like manner, and afterwards come to me again. Go now! I have lesser sinners to absolve."

"The river will be villainous cold, my father. And I cannot swim."

"Learn," said the inexorable priest. "Come not to me again till you have crossed the river as I have said. May you take into your evil stomach an abundance of cold water while learning."

The taverner retired dissatisfied, and when outside the church rubbed his head and ruminated. "The confession was ill-timed," he muttered. "His reverence is in an evil humour. The devil shall seize me body and soul before I set one foot into that accursed river. But there is Father St Agapit. I will go forthwith and confess to him."

The taverner's propitious star was in the ascendant. When he reached the chapel of Ste. Anne vespers had not concluded, for the office was there recited with greater reverence and detail than in the church of Ste. Mary Bonsecours. Michel pushed himself into a front place and hastened to make himself conspicuous by various fussy acts of outward devotion. The office over, he lingered until St Agapit came to him, and the taverner then repeated the confession which he had already made, with such disastrous consequences, to Laroche.

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"Since the evil nature of man drives him to drink much wine, let him partake of it as weak as may be, for his soul's health," said the sincere priest. "But, my son, it behoves you to make known to your patrons the truth."

"I dare not," said Michel, rejoicing at heart because he saw a prospect of cheating the devil.

"Then are you guilty of deceit," said the priest. "Mix water with your wine no more, and for your deceit you shall say the litany of St. Anthony of Padua six times before the altar of Ste. Anne. But see that you wash before approaching the holy shrine, because I perceive upon you the odour of wine-casks."

Having brought his duty to an end, St Agapit drew his cloak round him and went out. While studying that day the work of a German philosopher he had been confronted by the startling theory that the brain and stomach of the human system were possibly connected by means of nerves. He desired to procure from one of the settler-soldiers a dead rabbit which he might dissect for his own enlightenment.

As he went a woman met him.

"Father," she cried, "a soldier lies at my house at the point of death, praying for a priest to confess him."

"Follow me to the church," said St Agapit.

He passed back into the little log-building, took the reserved Host and the sacred oils from an inlaid case, and wrapping these consolations of the Church in his cloak accompanied the woman.

Upon a palliasse in one of the cabins on the eastern slope a young man lay dying of pneumonia, that fell

disease which the medical science of the day could only fight by sage shakings of the head and a judicious use of the cupping-glass. The commandant's own doctor stood there, a man with some knowledge of medicinal plants and skilled by long experience in the treatment of sword-cuts, helplessly watching the exodus of his patient.

"I resign him to your charge, good father," he said, bending his back to the priest. "He has passed beyond the help of science. Had I been summoned earlier"—he shrugged his shoulders—"a discreet use of the lance might well have relieved the fatal rush of blood to the brain and saved a life for the king."

"Perchance an incision in the stomach to release the foul vapours——" began St Agapit.

"Useless, my father. The disease, I do assure you, is in the blood."

The abbé knelt and administered the last sacraments of his Church. The young soldier remained entirely conscious and his confession came in a steady whisper.

"Father," he concluded, "I would speak with the commandant."

St Agapit looked at the physician by the flickering light of a pine torch. The latter shook his head.

"'Tis impossible. Roussilac is at supper. But I may leave a message as I pass."

"Say that Jean-Marie Labroquerie calls on him with his dying breath," whispered the soldier.

The physician left; the woman who owned the cabin moved silently in preparation for the carrying out of the body, because people were practical in the days when death by violence occurred almost hourly.

St Agapit lowered his thin face to catch the message of the passing man.

"Hidden in the straw you shall find a roll of parchment. I pray you take it and use it as you will. It is the work of my father, a learned man. We quarrelled. I stole his work and left my home. I repented and would have taken it back. It was of no service to me. I cannot read. If it be of value, let my old father gain the profit."

"Does he live within the New World?"

"Two days' journey beyond the river. In a log cabin surrounded by a palisade which these hands erected. My father healed some Indians who were sick, and thus obtained their friendship. There was I brought up with my sister, my fair sister. Oh, my father, I would see again my sister. I would feel the touch of her hand, and see her bright hair that flamed in the sun. I would give these my last moments for the sight of her eyes, and the sound of her voice, saying as she was wont, 'Jean-Marie, my brother! Life is a glorious gift.' Ah, my father!"

"Peace, son. Set your mind upon this suffering."

The abbé held a crucifix into the glow of the torch.

"Jesus is not so jealous, father, that He forbids us to love our own. I was going back when I could obtain my congé, like the prodigal, to seek my father's forgiveness. My mother was to blame for our unhappiness. Solitude and disappointment had embittered her life. She had a cruel tongue and her hand was rough. I was a coward. I fled. My sister's eyes have pursued me. I made myself a profligate, to forget. But memory is a knife in an open wound."

The minutes passed punctuated by the gasps of the sufferer. The torch burnt down to its knot, and another was kindled by the pale woman. The sound without was the wash of the tide.

"He comes not," moaned the soldier. "Bear me a message, father."

The dry rattling of beads broke the silence.

"Speak, my son."

The soldier uttered a piteous cry: "Madeleine! Madeleine!"

"Oh, son! Call rather on the name of Mary."

A gust of dark air swept into the cabin, the torch flame waved like a flag, and a man stood behind muffled to the eyes, breathing as though he had come with speed. He threw aside his martial cloak, and straightway stood revealed.

"Jean-Marie," he muttered.

"Arnaud. Stand aside, my father. Let me meet my cousin face to face."

The priest moved back, and the two soldiers, the officer and the fighting-man, stared into each other's eyes.

"Had I known this, Jean-Marie——" began the commandant; but the figure upon the palliasse, straining from death as a dog from the leash, broke in upon him.

"Cousin, you knew. When I have passed have you not averted your eyes, ashamed of the man who has had neither the wit nor the opportunity to rise? You have made yourself great, and I—but this is no time for calling up the past. I am spent. Come to me, cousin—nearer. Why, commandant, art afraid of a dying man?"

"Is he dying?"

"He is in God's hands," the priest answered; and the woman grumbled: "Yes, yes, and a long time lying there, keeping me from my bed."

"Out!" said Roussilac, turning upon her. "Out, and repeat not what you may have heard."

The woman slunk away frightened.

"Ah, cousin, that old manner," smiled Jean-Marie. "So spoke you as a boy. They said you would find greatness. My father would say, 'He is a Brutus. Would condemn his own son.' I know not who Brutus was, but my father was a learned man."

He coughed terribly and lay back gasping.

"Say what lies upon your mind and have done," reproved St Agapit. "I would have you die with better thoughts."

"Cousin," panted Jean-Marie, "I forgive you as I hope for mercy. Place now your hand on mine."

Roussilac did so, shrinking at the freezing contact.

"Your aunt and uncle and Madeleine your cousin dwell in this land, two days' journey beyond the river. My father was hunted for his life. They called him a wizard. You know? Yes, once at home you might have shielded him, but there was your advancement to be thought on. Swear to me to find them. Tell Madeleine how I died. Be good to her. Ah, cousin, be a brother to Madeleine. You shall find her the fairest sister in all this world. Swear to bring them from their solitude, to protect my father. Swear before this holy priest to feed and clothe them if they be in want, to care for them, and be to them a brother and a son."

Roussilac, who had softened for the moment, grew again stern. His position was not so sure that it could withstand the attacks of tongues that might whisper at home that the young governor of the new colony sheltered a heretic uncle. Jean-Marie was quick to note the change. He knew the hardness of his cousin's heart.

"Swear to me, or have my shadow cursing you through life."

The priest put out his arm with a word of adjuration.

"The crucifix," the commandant muttered.

St Agapit held it over the dying man.

"Touch not the sacred symbol without a prayer, my son. Beware God's wrath!"

With one hand grasping the cold fingers, the other pressed fearfully upon the metal figure thrilling in the priest's grasp, Roussilac took the oath that was required of him.

"And that I will keep it, I call God, our Lady, and the blessed saints to witness!" he concluded in a hushed voice.

Hardly had he spoken, and while he still watched his cousin lying white with the light fading from his eyes, the fortress from end to end became tumultuous. A gun roared, a din of shouting, the thud of flying feet, the shriek of women, the cry of his soldiery swept up the slope in wave upon wave of uproar.

"An attack!" he cried. "And I am from my post!"

"Peace!" said St Agapit, with a frown. "The God of battles is not here."

"Arnaud," came the hollow whisper out of the

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tumult, "I have more to say. My voice goes. I pray you bend your head."

"I came secretly," said Roussilac wildly. "I cannot stay. Father, duty is calling me. My reputation, my position——"

"Your family," said the priest, pointing sternly.

The night air became a storm with the shout:

"The Iroquois! The Iroquois are upon us!"

"Cousin!" whispered the dying man.

"My position!" cried the commandant; and turning with the confession he caught up his cloak, saying: "I will return. I will come back to you, Jean-Marie. My country calls me."

"His ambition!" murmured the lean priest, as the door swung back, and the tumult rolled in like a raging sea flung upon a cave.

CHAPTER XXI.

IRON AND STEEL.

THE fortress was invested upon three sides : up the precipitous westward slope swarmed the Senacas and Cayugas ; the fan-shaped body of the Onondagas advanced from the east, where the ground was broken ; eastward and westerly on the valley side, where the attackers hoped to strike the victorious blow, the confederate bands of the Mohawks and Oneidas lay hidden, awaiting the signal which had been agreed upon. The river occupied the line to the south, and between its banks and the enemy ambushed in the valley an outlet was left in order that the French might be given the opportunity of vacating their position. Once in open country, they might be broken up into bands and hunted down.

The attack from west and north had been arranged to draw the French from the one point where the fortress was vulnerable. It appeared as though the besieged were tumbling blindfold into the trap, which a general of experience would have at once suspected. Every fighting-man in the fortress assembled to hold the almost impregnable heights. In the absence of the leader this mistake was pardonable. There the noise of battle was terrific. The wild light of the bush fire beyond the river flung its shadows over the grass hill and cast into detail figures and flashing tomahawks. A storm of hissing arrows swept over

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the rocks. The bronze-skinned warriors rushed up and climbed the heights. The bravest of the Senacas, that hardy fighting race of the highlands, were already within the fortress, tomahawking the gunners with hideous yells.

The man-of-war was useless. Boats were let down, and the sailors flung ropes round the ends of the logs which supported the fire-raft, and towed the flaming peril away. Then the clumsy ship blundered up stream, only to find herself helplessly cut off from the enemy by the sheer wall of rock. She drifted back, and the master gave the order for the guns to be beached and dragged up the slope to strengthen the resources of the besieged.

"'Fore Heaven!" cried Van Vuren. "The natives win!"

The Dutchmen had perforce returned to watch the progress of the assault. They saw the Cayugas dealing blows against the summit, repulsed, but never actually losing ground. Each assault found the height invested more strongly by the overwhelming host. Similar success attended the ascent of the Onondagas. The rival factions swayed upon the distant summit, lit by the fire of the cannon.

The Dutchmen hovered in uncertainty, until the opposition yielded and the Indians began to burn the huts which looked down upon the river. At this signal a shout went up from the valley, and the Mohawks and Oneidas rushed out to complete the work. At the same time Van Vuren gave the word, and the big men re-crossed the river, gained the level, and joined the sachems and doctors who were dancing and screaming at the foot of the hill.

Abruptly a line of soldiers formed upon the crest to the roaring of cannon, and these trained fighters bore down through the smoke, sweeping away the opposition as wind carries the snow. Immediately yells of dismay sounded above, where the Indians who had been trapped were being put to the sword. The blind repulse had at length given way to method.

A report had passed about the fortress that Roussilac had been assassinated, and the body deprived of its brains became thereupon powerless to act. But Gaudriole came hopping from gun to gun, crying: "Courage, my comrades! I have seen the commandant. He did but go down to the chapel of Ste. Anne to confess his sins. See where he comes! Long live our governor!"

The soldiers caught up his cry and fought with new energy when they beheld Roussilac's slight figure wrapped in a long cloak. He passed deliberately from east to north, issuing his orders and rapidly altering the entire nature of the fight. The besieged became the attackers; the hunters became the hunted. Roussilac's pale face restored confidence. His contemptuous coolness brought victory within sight. Before setting the trap for the Cayugas and Senacas his martial eye had lingered upon the silent valley. There he concentrated his best fighters, and despatched an order to the ship, directing the master to bring up the naval guns. The sailors were soon at their work, dragging the light guns into position and training the muzzles upon the suspected valley, while powder-monkeys ran up with charge and ball, and the gunners arranged their port-fire.

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With the attack of the previously ambushed Mohawks, the battle for possession may be said to have commenced. Skill, holding a position which subsequent history proved to be practically impregnable, became opposed by numbers blindly indifferent to death.

The Dutchmen fled at that repulse when the natives about them had been flung back almost to the forest. They halted upon the beach and deliberated on the practicability of flight through the smoking country which hemmed the opposite shore. It was then that Dutoit made the discovery that two of his men were missing.

"We cannot regain the bodies," said Van Vuren, when the announcement was made. "The French mayhap have already discovered them, and thus know that we have taken arms against them. Flight is now forced upon us."

Dawn was near when Hough reached the scene of action. The din of battle had carried over the land, driving the birds and beasts northward in fear, and he and his stout comrade had started out at once. Scarce a mile had been traversed when Penfold's leg gave way; he sent his companion on, and hobbled slowly along his track, hoping to be in before the end.

At a glance the Puritan perceived the flaw in the attack.

"Why do ye waste your men against that wall?" he shouted at the chiefs. "Bring every man round to the east. Follow me, warriors. Follow, we shall conquer yet."

He might as profitably have addressed the stones. He ran in among the fighters, dealing blows with the

flat of his sword, and pointing through the shadows to the fierce conflict upon the edge of the valley.

"There!" he shouted, trying to recall some scattered words of the language. "There, where the sun rises!"

At length he made himself clear, and a section of the fighters, more cool-headed than the remainder, professed themselves willing to follow, and some of the hot-headed chiefs, perceiving method in the Englishman's madness, turned also calling back their men.

Twice had the Mohawks broken through the front line and been repulsed before reaching the cannon, which spouted its hail down the valley. A barrier of French dead piled the space beside the artillery. Rousillac strode to and fro, withdrawing men from points where they could ill be spared that he might throw them upon the side where the lines wavered. Here the flower of the fighting-men struggled. Laroche fought here like the brave man he undoubtedly was, swearing fearfully, but never ceasing from the skilful sword-play which freed many a brown warrior from the burden of the fight. A charm seemed to protect his great body, the arrows leaving him unscathed, the blows of the tomahawks seeming to deflect as they descended, until the soldiers fought for the pride of place at the side of the priest, whom they believed to be under the special protection of the saints.

"Infidels, unbelieving and unbaptised! Down, down!" shouted Laroche, blinking the sweat from his eyes.

Repeatedly the Iroquois turned the line at the

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weak spot which Nature had overlooked in her plan of fortification, but Roussilac was prepared always with a band waiting to stem the rush. This could not last. His soldiers were thinning, and there seemed to be no limit to the numbers of the Indians. They pressed up in horde upon horde, their shouts cleaving the moist wind, their arrows inexhaustible, their courage undiminished. Then the word came that the Cayugas and Senacas were giving way upon the west with the manifest intention of strengthening their allies.

"Let them come," cried Roussilac loudly, for his men's benefit. "Only send me as many soldiers as can be spared from that position." But to himself he muttered: "The game is up," and he wrung his brain for a *ruse de guerre*.

"Send me a dozen men with a cannon yonder to work round and attack these savages in the rear," he said to one of his captains, who had been put out of the fight by a wound in the arm. "If they can but raise sufficient noise they may appear as a relieving force. It disheartens even a brute to fight between two foes."

"We cannot spare the men, Excellency."

"They must be spared," replied Roussilac.

A messenger rushed up, breathless and triumphant.

"Excellency, the Algonquins are coming to our aid in force," he panted.

For the first time in many hours the commandant smiled.

"You spoke truly," he said to the captain. "We cannot spare those men."

He turned and recoiled with a shiver. St Agapit, a long, black figure, stood beside him in the wet wreaths of the dawn.

"Your cousin is dead," said the priest. "He died but half an hour ago, with a curse upon his tongue. You have lost me that man's soul."

He half lifted his hand and moved away, seeing nothing of the great struggle, heeding the clamour not at all, because the sun was about to rise and he had his Mass to say.

While light was breaking over the cliffs in the east, where the fishermen of Tadousac hid themselves throughout that night, Oskelano brought his men clear of the forest and disposed them upon the plain. The old man was no mean general. He sent out his spies, and when the men returned with the information that the French were being crushed by superior numbers he divided his force into three bands. The first he sent like a wedge between the Onondagas and the force advancing from the west under Hough's leadership; the second he flung to the north of the Mohawks and Oneidas; and, having thus completely separated the allied forces, he threw his third band upon the rear of the men who were slowly carrying the position from the valley.

The Cayugas and Senacas were beaten back to the river. The Onondagas, attacked on two sides and at first mistaking foe for friend, were shattered at a first charge and fled for the forest. The fighters in the valley alone held their ground, until the light became strong; and then Roussilac drew up his entire force and directed in person a charge which hurled the stubborn Mohawks back upon the axes of the Algonquins

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awaiting them upon the lower ground. The survivors fled and were pursued by the northern tribe. The French flung themselves down exhausted, while La-roche wiped his sword and streaming face, and panted a benediction upon dead and wounded and living alike.

Thus the Iroquois Confederacy received a shattering blow from which it never recovered ; and the land was made secure to France for a long two hundred years.

CHAPTER XXII.

OR AND AZURE.

AFTER that complete repulse of the Iroquois tribes the French found themselves so weak as to be practically at the mercy of a foe. Another resolute attack must have driven them from their position. But the Iroquois bands were completely disorganised ; the few English scattered about the maritime provinces, including that remnant of Scots in the east, who had settled Newfoundland and Nova Scotia only to see their territories wrested from them, were entirely inadequate even in combination to menace the supremacy of the House of Bourbon ; and it may be questioned whether, at that time, any Scotsman would have stood to fight side by side with the English. Soon another ship would arrive from Marseilles, bringing, not only provisions and ammunition, but a reinforcement of men, prepared to till the ground as settlers should, but far more ready to continue the French error of attempting to colonise with the sword.

On the heels of the discovery of two Dutch bodies among the Indian slain, La Salle returned, and conveyed to Roussilac the information that an English spy was escaping south. Gaudriole also announced that Van Vuren and his company were bearing in that same direction. Roussilac's hand was forced. If these men escaped him the fortress might be called upon to resist, not only an English, but possibly a

Dutch invasion also sent out twenty men immediately to cut off the Hollanders, leaving the garrison depleted to no more than fifty men available for defence; and the commandant made haste to reward Oskelano for his services as suitably as his resources would permit, and sent him home, fearful lest the treacherous Algonquin might discover, and take advantage of, his weakness.

When La Salle stood before him, and announced that the English spy was the guest of one Madame Labroquerie, a widow living with her daughter in the country to the south, the commandant refused to betray himself, but replied that he would accompany the priest and be a witness to the hanging of the Englishman. At the same time, he considered, he might keep the oath which he had sworn to his dead cousin. Having given the order for a troop of men to attend upon his person, he abandoned the subject which awoke in him unpleasant memories, and bowing haughtily to La Salle—for he and the priest were in a manner rivals—congratulated him upon his appointment to the governorship of Acadie, the confirmation of which, signed by the Cardinal himself, had lately been delivered by the hand of the master of the *St. Wenceslas*.

"This fortress will be the weaker for your loss, Sir Priest," he said, feigning a sorrow which he could not feel. "May I seek to know when you propose to set forth to the undertaking of your new responsibilities?"

"If my work here be finished what time the *St. Wenceslas* sails homeward I shall depart with her," La Salle replied, flashing a disdainful glance upon

Roussilac. "But I have yet to rid this land of its English vermin."

With that implied scorn of the governor, and suggestion of his own superiority, La Salle departed to make his preparations; and an hour later a troop of horsemen rode forth, Roussilac at the head, and beside him Gaudriole jesting for his chief's amusement; on the other side the two priests—for Laroche accompanied his senior—and behind six soldiers, riding two abreast on bright bay ponies, their weapons flashing in the sunlight.

There had been war in the grove. An angry scene passed between mother and daughter when Madeleine returned after seeing her lover upon his way. For the first time in her life the girl lost her sweet patience, and returned word for word so hotly that Madame at length became afraid, and backed away, yet muttering:

"Men shall stay your pride, girl, if a weak woman may not."

"They also shall find that a resolute mind is not quickly broken," Madeleine returned.

"The law against heresy is still in being," Madame threatened, made still more bitter by the knowledge that her daughter and Geoffrey had together outwitted her. "I have borne with you, because you are my child. Our Lady punishes me for my lack of devotion. I had speech but recently with a holy priest. We shall see, when that priest returns. We shall see!"

"Drive me from you with that bitter tongue, as you drove out Jean-Marie," cried Madeleine, her fair throat swelling like a bird in song. "So shall you die

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without son or daughter at your side, and none but an Indian shall see you to your grave."

At that Madame put up her hand with a superstitious gesture, and limped away, her yellow face wrinkled with rage; nor did she speak again to her daughter until the Indian servant entered the cabin to announce the coming of a warlike band. Then she croaked at Madeleine: "'Tis the holy priest. Know you not, girl, how those are punished who conspire to aid an enemy of their country?" Then she hastened away to don the cap and gown which she had kept against the coming of a change of fortune.

There came a sound of voices, the troop rode into the grove, and Madeleine, as she stood trembling at the door, was greeted by Gaudriole, who bowed and grinned as he announced his Excellency the Commandant to visit the Madame Labroquerie and the fair lady her daughter.

"I am Madeleine Labroquerie," stammered the girl, frightened for a moment by the brave show of mounted men.

"Cousin," cried a half-familiar voice, "hast put a friend and relative out of memory?"

Dazzled by the sunlight after the gloom of the cabin, Madeleine shaded her eyes. She saw before her a tall man, sallow and dark, his hair falling in snaky lines to his shoulders, the golden fleur-de-lys worked upon his blue surcoat making his face the more sickly by comparison. Before she could return his salutation he had dropped to his knee and kissed her hand.

"Years have passed since we parted, cousin," he said. "The present finds me with position, and you

with beauty. I knew not that you were here until your brother told me."

"Arnaud!" she exclaimed, giddy with amazement at finding the boy who had been the autocrat of childhood's games grown into a man of power. Then, because her heart was so tender to all that breathed, she forgot the character of the man who was looking down upon her with increasing wonder to find how the plain child with the tangle of flaming hair had blossomed into this lovely creature, and asked quickly: "Jean-Marie—what of him?"

Roussilac was not a man to tell ill-news gently. Wasting neither words nor sentiment, he replied: "Your brother died but recently of fever, calling upon your name with his last breath."

His final words were intended to show her that he had been by the sick man's side until the end.

Madeleine turned white and tottered. Then, as her strong heart recovered, she said:

"Let me call my mother. My father has long been dead. We have ren. . . poor, Arnaud," she added defiantly. "But if y. . . ascended, we have at least not descended."

"To what higher pinnacle can a woman wish to attain than that of perfect beauty?" he replied gallantly; but he noticed that she left him with a frown.

"Had I but known that she had grown so fair!" he muttered.

Gaudriole was grinning at her side. The dwarf put up his red hand and showed his chief a dead butterfly, its bright plumage well-nigh worn away, its wings crushed and wet.

"Short-lived beauty, Excellency," he leered, with

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the jester's privilege. "Yesterday shining in the sun. To-day!" He laughed hoarsely and dropped the ruined insect. "'Tis a world of change and contrast," he chuckled. "Mark this philosophy, my captain. When old age sends me white hairs and a reverend aspect you shall perchance call me beautiful, if you look not too closely at my hump; but when the bloom of yonder beauteous lady turns to seed——"

"Off, Bossu!" cried Roussilac angrily. "Learn to turn your jesting with a better judgment, or your tongue shall be slit and your back whipped."

"My faith!" the dwarf chuckled. "I have no back. I am like the frog, but shoulders and legs."

Madame herself appeared in a fresh white cap and an antique gown. It was not her way to be gracious, nor were her recollections of her nephew's fidelity of the happiest; so she did but greet him coldly, asking why he had now come since he had tarried so long.

"Good aunt," came the reply, "I would have sought you earlier, had I known you were in this land. I have not long held command, and my hands have been filled in crushing the strength of the Iroquois. I entreat you both to return with me now and take up your abode at the fortress, not indeed as my guests, but as an honoured mother and sister."

"Pretty talk," sniffed Madame. "I said in the old days you would make a courtier. So you, the governor of the land, knew nothing of this home of your poor relations a paltry two days' journey beyond the river. There is no man so blind as he who makes a living by that infirmity. This girl tells me that my son is dead. Died he in the faith of the Church?"

"Surely," said Roussilac. "But tell me I pray,

good aunt, is it true, as this Indian says, that the English spy has already escaped?"

"Yes, he has gone," cried Madeleine, flushing warmly. "He has gone, Arnaud, to—to the west."

Her deceit was so transparent that even Roussilac could not restrain a smile.

"And why, fair cousin," he asked, addressing her with marked deference, "why should this Englishman seek the unknown west, where it is believed none dwell save Indians? Would he not rather turn towards the south, and seek New England and his own people?"

"Indeed I know not why he should seek the west," Madeleine replied, between tears and laughter. "But I do assure you he has gone in that direction——"

"Peace, girl," her mother cried. "The fool lies to you, Arnaud. She is a heretic, shame though it be, and her master is the father of lies. 'Tis true the English spy escaped in the early morning, but he knows not the land, and may yet be secured. I am surrounded all my life long by wickedness," the bitter woman continued. "My husband was perverted by the sin of science. Jean-Marie was but a knave. He left me here. Madeleine is a heretic, and she has threatened to leave me also. Well, I will come with you, Arnaud, but see that you give me a scented pillow for my head and a cup of warm wine at evening. Stand not there, nephew, like a wooden stock, but command one of yonder evil-faced rogues to bring up a horse fitted for the age and dignity of the first lady in this thrice-accursed land."

An evil smile curved the thin line of Roussilac's mouth. His aunt had indeed not changed; but she

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had yet to learn that he had advanced. He turned to where the priests were talking loudly in the shade of the grove, noting La Salle's anger at the failure of his mission, and a few paces beyond his troopers jesting in the sun. Then he looked upon the fair face of Madeleine and smiled again.

"Tamalan," he called, dividing his attention between the soldier he was addressing and his aunt, "prepare your pony for the use of the first lady in this great colony of France—the lady Madeleine Labroquerie."

He bowed slightly towards the silent girl.

For one instant Madame appeared to stifle. Then she drew back her lips and snarled at her nephew, yet without uttering a word.

"This is not Normandy, Madame," said Roussilac calmly. "And you have not here the boy whose cheeks you would smite when the angry fit was on you. This is the New World, and I am the Representative of his most sacred Majesty, King Louis the Thirteenth."

Madame started forward, two passionate red spots upon her cheeks, her bony hand uplifted; but Roussilac indicated the golden fleur-de-lys upon his breast and said, in the quiet consciousness of power: "Remember!"

The little woman stood for a moment motionless, grinding her teeth, her black eyes starting from a ghastly countenance, then flung herself back into the cabin, tearing at her hair and cap in the madness of her anger. Roussilac watched with the same quiet smile, and when she had gone turned to Madeleine and said:

"My aunt forgets that time may work a change."

"Pardon her," murmured the girl. "This solitude has touched her brain."

Then La Salle strode up with angry questionings: "Shall we tarry here all the day, Sir Commandant, while the heretic escapes? Know you not that New England swarms with Puritans, who, if they but hear of our weakness, shall fill this land and compel us forth by their numbers?"

"You speak truly, Sir Priest," Roussilac answered. "We do but waste our time."

Crossing to the men, he selected the five strongest ponies and the five most trustworthy soldiers, and charged the latter to ride out, secure the Englishman, and hang him out of hand. These men set forth immediately, while Roussilac turned himself to the task of soothing La Salle, and to the pleasure of flattering the fair lady his cousin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE EVERLASTING HILLS.

AFTER their escape from the dangerous region of the fortress on that night of battle, Van Vuren and his band made towards the far-distant country watered by the Hudson, travelling under the guidance of Pieter von Donck across the unfrequented territory, over balsamic hills of spruce, through swamps and thickets, and across a desert of dusty stone, until they reached a range of green mountains which made an immense backbone along the land. Here they halted, and the note of argument was raised. Van Vuren had developed a sullen mood, induced by jealousy of Von Donck, who had taken the office of leader upon himself, and at this point he turned upon the sailor and a heated battle of words ensued. The captain indicated the flat district spreading westward, and confidently declared that the route lay there. His men obediently turned to follow, with the exception of Von Donck, who, when his argument failed, separated himself forthwith from the company.

"Take then your inland path," he shouted at them angrily. "You shall in due time come among the savage Adirondacks, where the Mohawks dwell unconquered, and where all manner of wild beasts fill the fastnesses. No white man has preceded you there. This way I smell the sea. Keep your course,

captain, if you will not be ruled by me. I am for New Amsterdam and the hostel beside San Nicolas."

"Pieter knows the land," urged Dutoit.

"G, then with the stubborn fool," replied Van Vuren hotly. "Follow me, my men. This way for the sea!"

The rest of the company succumbed to discipline and followed their leader, though with manifest unwillingness; while Von Donck gave them over to their fate and travelled alone into the green hills.

What befell Van Vuren and his company history relateth not. It is certain that they were never taken by the French, because the party which Roussilac had sent out returned in due course to the fortress, and reported that they had failed to discover any trace of the traitors. But at a later date there went a story about Hudson's river, concerning a party of Dutchmen said to be haunting the spurs of the Adirondacks, weather-beaten men, wrinkled and long-bearded, their feet covered with scraps of hide, their clothes eked out by furs, continually setting out upon a journey, but always returning to their starting-point. Still later, after New Amsterdam had been conquered by the English and had received the name of New York, mothers would often frighten their errant children with the tale of the lost Dutchmen who wandered about the north, their beards dragging on the stones and tangling among the bush, watching the sun by day and the stars by night, and sometimes separating as though in anger, but only to combine again and renew the hopeless search. Probably Van Vuren and his men were destroyed by the fierce Mohawks; possibly they fell a prey to the animals which roamed in

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their thousands among the Adirondacks, or perished of want after their ammunition became exhausted ; the one fact is certain that not one of them ever reached the sea-blown country of the Manhattoes.

While this fatal dissension took place Geoffrey was crossing the plains upon the further side of the green mountains, only a short distance ahead. He had made excellent progress, concealing himself cleverly from bands of marauding Indians, guiding his feet by the constellations at night, and searching by day for the tree-moss which delicately furred the north side only of the hemlock boles ; but there still remained over two hundred miles of wild country between him and the town of Boston. He tramped on, unheeding sore feet, feeling the spirit of brave Madeleine at his side, averting the perils of night, guiding his feet accurately southward. As time went on, and he reflected how great was the distance he had already traversed, the joy of life became so strong that he could have flung away his sword and dared the world with bare hands.

Two weeks had passed since that parting from his comrades ; and on the evening of the fourteenth day he broke from the bush and for some moments stood bewildered at the scene before him, blinking his eyes, and longing to step back into the greenwood shade.

White masses of mountain glowed ahead, peaks and crags all glittering in the sun like a huge cascade streaming down from the clouds ; ranges of pure crystal, polished like glass, and edged with rose-pink by the colours of the western sky ; snow-white gorges of milky quartz, and silver cataracts flung in foam from the whiteness above to the green below.

"These," he said softly, with a thrill of old-world superstition, "these must surely be the great crystal mountains where the Iroquois believe that the gods dwell."

He hurried on, his eyes watering because of the dazzling light reflected from those crystal walls; and as he went he turned to lover's thoughts, and determined that, after all, the sun glow upon the white peaks was not one-half so lovely as the flush upon Madeleine's soft cheek. Here before him was Nature's finest insentient handiwork. It was glowing and full of music, but its loveliness lacked life, and its warmth was borrowed from the sun. It was only beautiful as a part of the environment of the life of the soul. How he longed for Madeleine to stand at his side and behold those everlasting hills in splendour and the sun swimming in red! And with that longing he half unconsciously breathed the healthful text to which she had attuned her happy soul, "It is life—glorious, everlasting life!"

Vitality rose to its full height within Geoffrey's body; and when he felt no more the weight of his heavy kit, he ran over the broken ground and up the narrow gorge, until two white walls closed him gently into the panting bosom of the crystal hills.

"Here is the home of fairies," he exclaimed, when he stopped at a great height, and looked upon three tiny lakes which made a trinity of motionless mirrors decked by feathers of cloud, the water like white wine brimming in great bowls of granite.

Immediately a gentle voice was wafted through the air, "Here is the home of fairies," and after a pause the information was repeated like the warble of

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a weary bird, the last notes dying inaudible around the cliffs.

Geoffrey dared not speak again. The genius of the place was over him, waiting to give a signal to the expectant choir. Footfalls preceded the traveller, the echo of his own. The many-mouthed King of the Mountains pattered before him, breathing the stranger a gentle welcome to the district which he ruled. Geoffrey crept on tiptoe to the edge of the nearest pool, until he could see the weedless rock-bottom and the land-locked salmon lying near the surface, gently fanning their red fins, and watching him with wondering eyes. Seating himself, the traveller bathed his weary feet and watched the water swallows, darting and splashing, snatching the fat flies which spotted the surface like drops of rain, sucking them in and pushing out their little black noses for more.

The sun went down and a chill crept into the wind. Geoffrey left the enchanted spot, and the salmon shooting like silver arrows through the darkening pool, and, again ascending, entered a richly-wooded glen through which a cascade ran in a white thread; and here, close to a winding path beaten out by the feet of mountain sheep, he pitched his camp and ate his frugal meal of dried meat, which he eked out by a few early berries and some sweet roots of the wood althæa.

The light went out from the long day as he sank into dreams of Madeleine. He pictured her swaying among the scented grasses of the lowlands, or breathing a prayer for his welfare while she awaited the evening star in the faint blue of the sky. He saw her leaning from the hill-top watching the southern line,

and bounding joyously away when she found the sky all clear. He imagined her lying asleep with her mind awake for him ; and he believed that in his sleep her sweet dreams would cause his lips to open and his tongue to call her name.

A rustling in the near bush recalled him to the present. He thought the sound was occasioned by some restless bird, but when the disturbance became more decided, he rose, alert, and, putting out a hand for his bow, shrank back into a place of shelter. Hardly had he done so when a thicket of willow shivered and parted.

The watcher saw two savage eyes aglow like lamps, and as he sank to the ground and remained motionless as a figure of stone, a great panther slouched into the open, with its nose upon the ground.

The creature passed, blowing up the dust as though following a fresh scent. Geoffrey noticed with a thrill of relief that the ground it was intent upon was not that which he had traversed. When the huge cat had crawled into the bush, he drew out one of his few remaining arrows and cautiously followed ; but not more than twenty paces had he advanced into the clinging bush when there came to him for the first time during his wanderings the exclamation of a human voice.

Geoffrey plunged forward recklessly until he saw a circular opening such as Nature delights to make in her laying out of the densest forest. The cataract formed the left ; a bank of trees rose to the right ; opposite him a big man sat in the half light, holding a smouldering pipe, his eyes fixed in terror upon the panther, which lay upon its belly half a dozen yards

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away, growling and lashing its tail in its savage cat's joy. The man was unarmed. He had left his pack and weapons under a shelf of white rock which gleamed behind.

Viner edged nearer, but as he stirred a twig snapped and the panther looked round, its eyes full of fire and blood. At the same moment the stout man discovered his rescuer and a flush of colour returned to his bloodless cheeks. Keeping his eyes upon the enemy, he began to crawl towards the rock, shouting as he went: "Drive at him, boy. Send a shaft through his neck, and Pieter von Donck shall stand your friend for life."

The bolt, well-aimed by the boy's cool hands, sprang that instant into the beast's shoulder. As it felt the sting of the barb, the panther roared and leapt mightily into the bush, landing upon the exact spot which Geoffrey had cleverly vacated in time to save his life. Again Von Donck bellowed like a bull:

"Let him have one such another, comrade. Then into the bush and dodge him. I have powder here and ball."

Geoffrey hurriedly slipped another arrow along the groove of his cross-bow and secured the string. Quick as he was, the great cat was quicker. It hurled itself upon the tree behind which its enemy had taken shelter, and its iron claws wrenched off great flakes of bark. Again Geoffrey saved himself by leaping back, but the panther was up at the rebound and on him. For the third time Geoffrey dodged, and in doing so released the string, and the bolt, by happy chance, pierced the demon in the chest as it descended. The next instant Geoffrey was felled to the moss. But

this effort was the panther's last. An explosion shook the bush, there came a villainous smell of saltpetre, a whirl of smoke, and the mountain cat fell upon its side, quivered, and lay dead.

"A brave invention this powder," snorted Von Donck triumphantly out of the smoke. "But methinks too costly save for an emergency." He broke off and muttered into his beard: "A thousand devils! The boy is English."

"A strange meeting, friend," said Geoffrey, as he rose somewhat blindly to his feet.

"Adventure makes many an alliance," quoth the Dutchman. "Were you black, or brown, or yellow man, I would take your hand and swear to stand your friend. You have saved my life, boy. Nay, deny it not, and at the further risk of your own. By my soul, the brute has clawed your shoulder. This must be seen to. Come, lie you here, while I bring water and wash the wound and bind it up as best I can. A pestilence destroy these same unholy animals. They strike a man like lightning."

"If I have saved your life, you have done as much for me," said Geoffrey. "Let us divide the honours."

"A hand-shake upon that," cried the hearty Dutchman. "We are enemies by blood, boy. You have fought against my people before this night, and are like, I doubt not, to do so again. The Puritans of Massachusetts have their eyes upon our New Netherlands. You and I may yet meet upon opposite sides in the battle; but may God forge a thunderbolt for my destruction if I do not seek to preserve the life of one who has shed his blood for me. I suspect, boy, you are no true Englishman. I dare swear your father or mother came of a good Dutch stock."

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"I am English born and bred," said Geoffrey. "I could wish you were the same," he boldly added.

"Out, jester!" said the big man as he went down to the cataract. "It is your envy speaking. Black never made itself whiter by longing."

The Dutchman returned with his hat half filled with water and attended to the injuries of his new friend, with podgy hands which were but a little less rough than the nature of the man who owned them. Every protestation on the part of his patient he silenced by a growl. When the slight flesh-wound had been bandaged, he replenished the fire to keep other mountain cats at bay, and they sat together under the white wall, Von Donck occupied in skinning the defunct panther, chatting noisily the while.

"Do you wonder that I speak your language when I have been brought up to a better?" he observed as the soft night grew upon them. "A soldier of fortune must needs pick up all he can, grains and chaff alike. Many years past, before that yellow hair of yours had grown to trouble a maiden's heart—Ah, that blush was good. Shall repeat the phrase. Before that yellow hair had grown to win a Dutchman's heart—see how I spare your blushes to hurt your pride—I served under Hendrick Hudson, who called himself English, though plague me if I could ever tell what was English in him save his oaths. I promise you he could ring an English oath to drown the best of yours. To-morrow will tell you how I sailed with him up the Mohican river which now bears his name. 'Tis a happy day for you, young comrade. Your future wife and children shall bless this day—when you and old Pieter met. Plague the lad! His face is like a poppy in a corn-field. Shall stand together,

young yellow-head, till the end of this journey. I do not seek to learn your business, but you shall know mine. I am going home, boy, back to San Nicolas by the sea, and there shall grow a yet rounder belly, and tell travellers' tales, and toss my neighbours' children upon my knee. We shall part in New England, enemies if you will, but until we reach the fields of the Puritans we stand together, and the Indians that burn you shall burn me."

"How come you to be travelling alone?" asked Geoffrey.

"When you reach my age, young whipster, you shall learn that questions are like thistle-seed, tossed here and there, serving no better purpose than the sowing of a fresh weed-crop. I ask no question, but I know that you carry a despatch to your Puritans in the south. See how shrewdly I have hit it. Until two days back I travelled with my company, but when they chose the way which leads to destruction I left them. They have gone to the devil, and I am for the sea. At this present time I am for sleep. When the moon touches yonder ridge, wake me and I will take my watch. This panther's family may be on the prowl."

"'Tis a fine skin," said Geoffrey, indicating the striped coat which Von Donck was stretching along the rock.

"Will look well upon my shoulders," said Pieter complacently. "'Tis mine by hunter's right. Shall swagger about New Amsterdam in it and shame the burgomaster. At nights will sit in the hostel and say how I killed him with mine own hand. The folk shall not believe, but I shall have the hunter's satis-

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faction of making a brave show. By San Nicolas, the brute shall not die so easily when I come to tell the story."

The garrulous old sailor made a bed of grass and moss, and prepared to sleep. Suddenly he broke into a deep laugh, and lifted his hand to indicate a crystal ridge towards which the moon was drawing.

"See you how yonder granite is shaped into a man's face?" he said. "And, as I live to sin, a likeness of mine own. See there my crooked nose and flabby forehead and my hanging lips? Behold my beauty, boy, and bear in mind that Pieter von Donck and yourself are the first travellers in these crystal mountains. Ah, Pieter von Donck! Pieter von Donck!" he continued in a shout, lifting himself upon his elbow, and shaking his fist at the massive face of granite. "You sleep well yonder, Piet von Donck. May you sleep as soundly for ten thousand years. Now, boy, remember me in your prayers, but see that you put me not before your sweet maid. God forbid that you should put an ancient rogue before her. Forget not to shake me by the shoulder when the moon snuffs the nose of yonder old man of the mountains."

He fell back and soon began to snore, while Geoffrey watched the stern stone profile and the moon rolling serenely over the crystal heights; and as he watched he drifted away into dreams.

These aerial castles toppled and fell when there came to his ears from the adjoining valley a disturbance, which might have been occasioned by mountain gnomes beating the rock with hammers of iron.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ART-MAGIC.

THROWING off his sleep with a deep breath so soon as Geoffrey touched his shoulder, Von Donck stared up at the moon, and then upon the equally pale face of the watchman, who knelt over him and exclaimed: "Hear the sounds along yonder valley?"

In a moment the Dutchman was on his feet, alert and listening.

"So," he snorted, when the steady tap-tap of the fairy hammers reached his ears. "We are first here by only a little. How is that should a young fighter? Too stiff to draw a bow, or cross a sword?"

"What mean you?" asked Geoffrey.

"Frenchmen are upon us. The knaves to ride o' night when honest folk sleep! They have forgot that the blessed echo carries far beyond them. Now 'tis for me to contrive some snare for your executioners."

Geoffrey quaked at the ugly emphasis which the big man gave to his words. A new feeling of security had come to him with the sealing of his partnership with the stout Hollander; and it appeared as though his dream of safety was to be dissipated before it had taken a concrete form.

"What else think you?" went on Pieter, with his snorting laugh. "Shall Roussilac allow a spy to reach New England, there to make known his weak-

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ness, without striking a blow for his capture? See you that straight limb on yonder pine? I tell you that slim body of yours would have swung there ere sunrise, had you not by good luck fallen in with Pieter von Donck."

"They shall never hang me," said Geoffrey defiantly.

"Spoken like a Dutchman," said the sailor. "But now to work. I have as little mind as you to die out of season, for my shrift shall be as short as yours if yonder little men pull me down. Scatter the fire, and remove all traces of our camping-place, while I pull at my pipe and think. The soldiers have a hard climb before them yet."

Von Donck screwed the pieces of his wooden pipe together, filled the bowl, and taking a brand from the fire, removed to the edge of the cataract. There he sat, puffing great clouds, his eyes settled upon the ravine, his face stony in thought, while Geoffrey swept the fire into the cataract and obliterated all traces of the recent struggle with the wild cat.

"Bring me my panther hide," called Von Donck, rising with leisurely movements. "We shall win a bloodless victory, and enjoy a laugh to boot. Yonder lies the man to fight for us."

He pointed with the stem of his pipe into the middle of the moon.

Refusing to divulge more of his plan, Von Donck threw the pelt across his shoulder and strode into the bush. Geoffrey followed, and the two men struggled on for upwards of a mile, until the ground went away sharply and the cataract thundered far below through a neck of rock scarcely more than four feet in width.

Here Von Donck halted and steadied his body upon the brink.

"If I fail to make this jump, reclaim my body from yonder depths, and say that I fell like a soldier," he jested.

Crossing the chasm, they descended, letting themselves from rock to rock, and running whenever a sheep walk became visible. As they entered the ravine the noise over the hills became more definite.

"How is it they have tracked me?" asked Geoffrey as they ran.

"I have no breath for idle talk," gasped his comrade. "They bring with them an Indian, one of the cursed Algonquins, who shall tell when even a bird has hopped across a stone."

The climb began, up the face of the hills to the region of the moon. The crystal wall was nowhere precipitous. When the summit had been attained, Von Donck flung himself between the mighty lips of the granite face and gasped heavily. Some minutes elapsed before speech returned to him.

"I would as soon carry a man upon my back as this weight of flesh," he growled. "By San Nicolas, I did never so sweat in my life."

"This is open rock, without tree or shelter," said Geoffrey wonderingly. "We could have made a better stand in the bush."

"Hasten yonder," ordered Von Donck. "Bring me as much dry wood as you can bear, and ask no question, or I shall heave you down the face of this cliff, which it has well-nigh killed me to climb."

When Geoffrey returned with a few dry pine sticks, Von Donck was collecting some moist moss

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from the underpart of the rocks. The moon stood above the granite nose of the colossal face, and by her light the Dutchman drew an imaginary line from the twin projections, which became invested by distance with an exact similitude of the human mouth, to a hole in the rock some twelve yards away. Here he built a fire, placing above the grass and dry sticks a pile of white moss. Then he sat down and well-nigh choked with laughter.

"Prepare to strike a spark," he whispered. "But let no smoke arise if you would escape hanging. The troop shall carry away with them a tale to make these crystal mountains feared for ever."

"What plan is this?" said Geoffrey irritably. "We stand upon the most exposed spot of these mountains, and do you propose to light a fire so that all who are concerned may know where we may be found?"

"Control that voice and temper," whispered Von Donck. "Every sound carries over yon ravine. Come, sit near me, and watch as pretty a piece of art-magic as brain of man ever devised. Show not yourself above the great face, or we are undone, and drop no spark into that fire if you love your life."

Geoffrey crawled along the side of the face and lay flat beside the Dutchman's knee. The latter proceeded:

"The Indians have great fear of these mountains. I promise you yonder Frenchmen are driving their guide at the point of the sword, and feeling none too secure themselves at entering the devil's country. A man who fights a good sword shall sweat when a bird screams o' night. So soon as they show themselves

the old man of the mountains shall lift up his voice, and you shall find, boy, that his tongue is mightier than our swords."

When Von Donck had spoken a breath of wind swept the exposed ridge. As it passed a faint groan arose from the rock, and passed, leaving them staring at each other fearfully.

"It was but the wind," Geoffrey muttered.

"San Nicolas!" stammered the Dutchman. "This comes of playing with the powers of darkness. 'Twas the groan of a lost spirit."

"Stay!" whispered Geoffrey. "I thought that the sound proceeded from yonder stone."

His comrade regarded the round mass which had been indicated with starting eyes, but when he saw nothing supernatural, crawled near and examined it nervously, asking:

"Think you some spirit is imprisoned within?"

"See this hole?" exclaimed Geoffrey, pointing to a small aperture visible at the base. "'Tis what they call a blow-stone, if I mistake not. Here the wind enters and so makes the noise that we heard."

"Soft," said Von Donck, vastly relieved. "Soft, or you spoil my plan."

Setting his lips to the hole, Geoffrey sent his breath into the womb of the rock. A subdued murmur beat upon the air and settled the matter beyond dispute. Von Donck rocked himself to and fro, chafing his legs with his podgy hands, scarlet with excitement.

"A hundred thousand devils, but they shall run," he chuckled. "I had purposed to use my own voice, but this is better far."

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The sound of other voices came in a murmur across the ravine.

"To the fire," whispered the Dutchman. "Nurse the flame, and let it not burst forth until I give the word."

He scrambled up the side of the rock and looked over the giant's nose. The opposite cliffs were bathed in moonlight, and the watcher saw two men standing above the cataract.

"Now, boy," he muttered deeply. "Let the fire burn, and when the flames dart up choke them with the moss."

Geoffrey complied with the mysterious command; but as he pressed the moss down and a cloud of smoke ascended, a mighty bellowing shook the air, and he started round to behold Von Donck lying flat along the rock, his grotesque face and bulging cheeks pressed against the blow-stone, his body heaving like a gigantic bellows as he pumped his breath into the hole.

"More fire," came a choking whisper. "A strong flame, then smoke as before."

The flames darted up and whipped the moonbeams, the smoke followed, and again the bellowing shocked the night. Then Von Donck scrambled up, and his triumphant voice came down:

"They run! They run!"

The trackers were fleeing wildly from the crystal hills. Had they not seen fire and smoke belched up from the mouth of that terrible face of granite, and heard the giant's awful roars of anger? Headlong they went, mad with terror, leaving their ponies in the bush.

"Here is a brave victory," snorted Von Donck; and he gave vent to his delight by turning a caracole upon the forehead of the giant.

"Now for New Netherlands and Hudson's River!" he chanted, drawing at an imaginary cable as he danced along the great stone face. "'Tis scarce a hundred miles down to the sea. We have but to keep clear of Indians, and all shall be well. Yonder are ponies for us to ride, and, I doubt not, bags of provisions hanging to the saddles. We may laugh at pursuit, boy. The French shall not dare to return. Take now my hands and let me see you make a holiday caper. Higher! San Nicolas, the boy shall make a dancing-master. Ha, Pieter von Donck! Pieter von Donck! 'Tis as cunning an old rogue as ever wore shoe-leather!"

CHAPTER XXV

NOVA ANGLIA.

Good fortune and fair weather smiled upon the two travellers during the remainder of their journey, and not another notable adventure befell them, as they rode from the forest during the fall of day, and saw the fenced fields of the Lincolnshire farmer stretching before them down the Atlantic slope. Melancholy stumps of trees dotted the prospect as far as the eye could travel; beyond, the thatched or wooden roofs of small houses glowed in the strong light; and from the far distance came the inspiring wash of the sea.

Von Donck reined in his pony and fell from the saddle. "Dost now feel at home?" he cried.

Somewhat sadly Geoffrey shook his head. He was indeed grievously disappointed to find New England so different from the old. He had hoped to see neat hedgerows, compact farms, and sloping meadows, such as he might have looked on in his native county of Berks. He had hoped to see a wain creaking over the fields, to hear the crack of a whip and the carter's cheery song. He saw nothing but poverty, small beginnings, and the signs of a hard struggle for existence. Some men were working in the distance. He could see the quick flash of their axes and hear the solemn blows as steel bit the wood. Between dreary lines of fencing, jagged stubs, patches

of corn, showing yellow here and there, springing from every cultivated foot of ground ; beyond, some acres of burnt ground, and those cold wooden houses with their enormous chimneys, so altogether unlike the warm brickwork of Old England homes.

"This is not Virginia?" he asked.

"Virginia lies five hundred miles to the south, very far beyond Hudson's River," replied Von Donck. "'Tis a fairer province than this, and better settled, because older. Be not downcast, boy. Here thought is free, and here a man may reap the full reward of his labours. You shall find no tax, nor persecution, nor kingly oppression in this land. Here the people rule for the people ; and here you may worship God after your own inclining, and dwell in peace all the days of your life."

"It is a barren land," protested Viner.

"What would you look for in the new world? That island of yours was once a land of forest and swamp. The first man was put into the garden to till it. Labour shall conquer here as elsewhere. Mark you the richness of the soil and the purity of the air. Here you shall fear no pestilence, and if your hands be not afraid to work you shall raise two crops of corn in one season. Gold and silver there are none ; but he who owns an ox and has no corn may exchange with him who has corn but wants for meat. In our settlement we use strings of wampum for currency. A shell from the beach becomes gold when it shall buy a man that which he lacks."

The comrades drew back into the forest and waited for evening, because Geoffrey would not advance alone, and Von Donck dared not risk his life among

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the Puritans, who were at war with the people of New Netherlands. They partook of their last meal together, and when the shadow of night grew heavy upon the fields, Pieter rose and shook himself.

"We have now come to the parting of our ways," he muttered. "You are among your people. We will together cross yonder fields, and then you shall wish me God-speed. The town of Boston lies upon your right hand. I shall beat inland at the base of Connecticut, until I reach the bank of Hudson's River, and there I am upon my own territory where no man shall lead me. I shall ride beside the river until I come to the little city of the Manhattoes, where William Kieft rules. San Nicolas! How old Will the Testy shall stare and blow at his pipe when he sees Pieter von Donck on the steps of his bowerie!"

They set out upon the last stage along a trail between the whispering corn. Von Donck had grown suddenly silent. He plucked at the panther skin, snorting occasionally, and casting side glances at his companion, who rode close to his side, intent upon the prospect of low houses and broken bush. When Geoffrey at length leaned over with a warning to point out the figure of a man, who was proceeding down a side path with a dog at his heels, the old Dutchman replied by touching the shoulder nearest him and saying:

"Dost feel the smart of that wound yet?"

"It is nothing," Geoffrey answered. "See you not that man advancing?"

"The marks shall remain," went on Pieter solemnly. "The scar will be there to remind you of a good friend in New Amsterdam. My lad, I shall

seek to hear of you. Each time I look on this skin I shall breathe a wish for the happiness of the boy who saved my life in the crystal hills. When you come to make your home in Virginia, send to Pieter von Donck at the hostel by San Nicolas, and if he be alive, and not grown too fat to walk, he will come out to meet you. Will not forget the old rogue who tricked the French?"

Geoffrey put out his hand and grasped the podgy fingers. "May I meet a traitor's end if I forget my friend," he answered. "Had it not been for you my dry body would now be swinging in the wind of the mountains. I wish you well, Pieter; I shall ever wish you well. Now ride! You would not have me fight for you against my own people."

"There is no English blood in him," snorted Von Donck. "A Dutchman, I say, a Dutchman to the ends of his hair."

The dog was bounding towards the travellers, and the farmer put up his hand and hailed them.

"We are Englishmen," Geoffrey called back.

"Now, by the sack of San Nicolas, out upon you," shouted Von Donck. "I am no Englishman. I am a Hollander, fellow, Hollander from head to heel."

"Ride!" exclaimed Geoffrey, smiting his comrade's mount. "God be with you, Pieter."

"And you, boy."

Von Donck lashed his pony and the nimble animal bounded off to the west, while Geoffrey dismounted, and, holding the savage dog at bay with his sword, advanced to meet the owner of the land.

"Do not fear, friend," he said, as they drew together. "I am no spy, but an Englishman from the

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north. He who rides yonder is a friendly Dutchman who has accompanied me upon the way. I pray you tell me is my Lord Baltimore within the town? "

The settler, a tall man in a quaker hat and black cloak, which fell from his neck almost to the ground, regarded the speaker with cold, unfavouring eyes.

"You know little of this country, young sir, if you believe that Lord Baltimore governs here," he replied at length. "You stand within the province of Massachusetts beside the town of Boston, and the lord you seek rules over the province of Maryland and that country to the west of the bay of Chesapeake."

Geoffrey's heart sank at this chill reception, and he lowered his eyes despondently before the stern gaze of the Puritan as he answered:

"I come to pray for a ship and men to be sent against the French, who hold the north. He who sent me, charging me to deliver this ring in his name to Lord Baltimore, believes that his countrymen and mine will not fail to help us in the time of need."

"Put not your trust in Massachusetts," said the listener dourly. "We have much ado to defend ourselves against the Mohicans and the pinch of famine. We know not ourselves where to turn for aid, and your cry is ours also. You have reached the valley of dry bones, young stranger."

"The dry bones stood up in an exceeding great army," returned Geoffrey boldly.

"Even so. If it be God's will, we also shall stand up. What is the name of him who sent you? "

"Sir Thomas Iden."

"Of county Kent? "

"The same."

"I have heard of that family as most loyal to the Crown. Arms, a chevron between three close helmets, if my memory mistake not. I also am from the south, driven out, like many a better man, by the hand of persecution. Come now! I will lead you to the house of John Winthrop, our governor."

The town of Boston was then a mere village of distressful huts crowded within a great palisade; the single street, which led to a quay of closely-packed logs covered by stones with earth atop, was rough ground over which the tyreless wheels of primitive carts jolted woefully. The candle-light from a few windows shed a dreary gleam across the way, where men closely muffled drifted along with a stern "Good-e'en." There was neither laughter nor tavern-singing nor play-acting in that cheerless town, no throwing of dice nor rattle of cups. The Puritan mind was dominant; and the only sound of music that disturbed the unhappy silence was the lugubrious droning of a psalm or sad-toned hymn.

A lamp flickered near the entry, and beside the watchman, who kept the light burning at the gate, stretched a board; and upon the board appeared in short black letters the notice:—

"No person within this province, professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall be in any ways troubled, molested, or discountenanced for his or her religion, or in the free exercise thereof."

"See!" said the guide, without a smile. "Here we have liberty!"

At the entrance to a low house near the end of the street they stopped, and the guide knocked. After a

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long interval a shutter was pushed back and a voice demanded to know who it was that knocked.

"A stranger from the north to see the governor," said the guide.

The voice grumbled and lessened gradually, still grumbling, until it sounded more loudly and the door opened. An old man stood on the threshold, a lighted candle in his hand, the thick grease running upon his fingers. He looked from one to the other, and cried in a shrill voice: "The governor is with his reverence. The stranger must wait."

"I am content to wait," said Geoffrey.

Hearing a sound, he looked back, and saw the man who had brought him so far already receding in the gloom of the street. The porter bade him enter, and when he had done so provided him with a seat, and there left him for a good hour, at the end of which time he reappeared in darkness and said shortly: "Come!"

The room into which Geoffrey was ushered contained all the marks of extreme poverty. The light came from one great log glowing in the big fireplace, for the night was chill with the breath of the sea and a sharp north wind. Two figures occupied this comfortless room, one on either side of the fire, the older man attired in the simple gown and bands of a minister of religion; the other, dark, with luminous eyes and white forehead, leaned forward, the long fingers of his right hand trifling with his wig. Both were well-known in their generation. The layman was John Winthrop; the minister Roger Williams.

"You are welcome to Boston, sir," said Winthrop, without rising, but merely lifting his head in the

firelight to scan the face of the visitor. "Come you to our town by chance?"

"I come from the far north to seek aid," said Geoffrey, with a boyish pride which caused Williams to frown.

"*Terra incognita* indeed," he murmured. "A cold land where Popery is rampant. How great is the distance, and how came you thence?"

Geoffrey told his story and delivered his message. The two men watched him intently, Winthrop always playing with his wig, Williams leaning out with hands clasped over a massive Bible held upon his knee. When Geoffrey had finished his tale, there was a moment of silence, broken only by the spitting of the fire. Then the Puritans looked across the hearth and smiled.

"The poor man is the helper of the poor," murmured Williams.

John Winthrop laughed bitterly.

"When a poor man begs of me he has my all, and that I give to our poor brethren in the north. They have my prayers. Young man," he went on, rising and confronting the messenger, "you have nobly performed a noble duty; but in coming to us you confront poverty indeed. Here night and day we struggle for existence. I myself have gone to rest, knowing not how to face the morrow. We have our wives and little ones to feed and protect, and these are our first charge. Daily the cry goes out to us: 'We want.' Nightly we dread to hear the shout of 'Mohican invasion.' We fight, not for fame nor for honour among nations, but for a foothold upon this continent, where we are striving to plant a home for the free, to the

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glory of God, and the shame of England who has cast us out. Young man, you have done your duty."

"And your help shall come from Heaven," murmured the divine deeply.

"I shall proceed to Lord Baltimore. To him I was sent," said Geoffrey.

"Go to him if you will, but the answer you shall there receive will be that you have heard already," said Winthrop. "Virginia is in sore straits, being unable to convey her tobacco crop to the Old World, since there are no English ships to cross the seas."

"Nevertheless I shall go," said Geoffrey.

John Winthrop bowed his head. "You shall sleep under my roof this night and accept what poor hospitality I have to offer. My friend and servant shall minister to your needs."

He made a slight movement of his hand to signify that the interview was ended, and the messenger retired, sorely depressed at the manner of his reception. The old man who had opened the door gave him food and drink, asking no question and imparting no information; but continually droning through his nose a hymn, or muttering in gloomy tones some sad portion of the Scriptures. He was one of the most zealous of Winthrop's company, all of whom were Nonconformists, but not separatists. Indeed, they esteemed it an honour to call themselves members of the English Church, and openly admitted that they had emigrated in order that they might be divided from her corruptions, but not from herself. For all his devotion, the old servant was not a cheerful companion for a man who was already cast down in mind, and Geoffrey was glad to be rid of him and alone in a

cold, bare room, which was as sad in all its details as the men who occupied the town.

It was long before sleep came to the traveller. He had become so accustomed to the open air that the atmosphere of his room stifled him. When at last he succeeded in finding unconsciousness the boom of the sea shook the house and occupied his brain.

Morning came, and with it a heavy tramp of feet. A rough hand struck the door, and the sleeper awakened with a start, to behold at his side three men, cloaked and stern, the foremost holding a scrap of paper, to which was affixed a red official seal.

"Sir stranger, surrender yourself," he said.

"What means this?" exclaimed Geoffrey. "I am an Englishman in a colony of the English."

"The charge against you is that of treason," replied the stern Puritan.

"Treason!" repeated the young man; and rose dumbfounded.

"It is suspected that you are a spy, in the employ of our enemies the Dutch."

CHAPTER XXVI.

STIGMA.

THUS Geoffrey became a prisoner among his own people, owing to the friendliness of Von Donck, the honest Dutchman having failed to reckon with the intense suspicion of the Puritan mind. When the manner of his guest's arrival had been explained to John Winthrop, that pious governor raised his eyebrows in astonishment, and did not hesitate to give instructions for the new-comer to be held in close confinement, pending an inquiry into the movements of the Dutch. While this investigation was being pursued, justly and in good order as the governor directed, or, in other words, with extreme slowness, many notable events occurred in the disordered country of the north.

The *St. Wenceslas* had slipped from her moorings and drifted down the St. Lawrence, bearing La Salle towards Acadie, and certain despatches which were destined for the chief minister of France. Unwillingly Roussilac had been compelled to record the services rendered to Church and State by the proud departing priest.

"You have well served yourself, Sir Commandant," La Salle had said, after insisting upon his right to peruse the detailed history of the Iroquois defeat, which contained no word of reference to the assistance rendered by the Algonquins. "And now, by

Heaven, you shall serve me." And Roussilac, for all his ill will, was not strong enough to dare resist the priest.

There yet remained in that district the Kentish knight, old Penfold, and the Puritan; and when the man of Kent came to learn of La Salle's departure, he left his solitary cave, and buckled on his sword, and returned to action, though the dream of his life had vanished. His younger brother, the fool of the family, who from boyhood had spent his days in idleness, trolling for pike or chasing with his dogs, would continue to occupy the old mansion which the elder had abandoned, and leave it, as he had been empowered to do failing news from the New World, to his son, when the days of fishing and the chase should be accomplished.

The knight came to his home beside the lost waters, and his wife, who had visited him each day with food in the lonely cave, received him with her proud silence and stood to hear his will. She it was who had told him of the sailing of the ship and the going of La Salle.

"Let us also travel to this land of Acadie," the knight said. "My Richard haunts me with reproaches. I go to make ready our canoe for the long journey. My mind shall find no rest till I have avenged our son."

He went out and built a fire upon the beach, and while the lumps of pitch, prepared from native bitumen mixed with pine resin, were melting, he peeled soft sheets of bark from the snowy birch trees and patched the canoe, caulking every seam with pitch. About the time of the evening shadow his work was

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done; but as he was returning to his home a voice called, and the Puritan hastened to his side.

"Welcome, friend," said the knight. "How fares it with you and your brave comrade?"

"We suffer who sojourn in Mesech," said Hough. "Old Penfold lies grievously sick of a fever."

"Dwell you far away?" the knight asked.

"Nigh upon two miles by land and water. We have returned to the cave which we occupied before our taking of the Dutch ship."

"My wife shall prepare a medicine. She is well skilled in the arts of healing," said the other. "You shall bring us to your cave with all speed."

"The disease has already taken hold upon his mind," said Hough. "One time he is holding his mother's gown, old man though he be, and wandering in water-meadows to pluck long purples and clovers, muttering as he picks at his blanket, 'Here is trefoil, good for cattle, but noisome to witches.' Another time he reaches for his sword, and swears—the Lord forgive him—at the weakness which holds him down. 'The French are upon us, comrades,' he calls. 'Let me not lie like an old dame with swollen legs.' Then he falls a-crying, and shouts, 'England! England!' Methinks if his mind were healed he would stand up again."

Mary Iden being summoned, and having made her preparations, the three set forth and came to the cave, which the adventurers had hoped to exchange for the Dutch vessel, then lying fathoms deep beneath the cliffs of Tadousac. There they found Penfold stretched along a heap of grass, babbling incessantly at the cold walls and the shadows. When the figures

darkened the entrance, he screamed at them and sprang up, only to fall back upon the rude bed, a fever-held bod, agitated by stertorous breath.

"Build me here two fires," said the quiet woman, as she passed to the sick man's side.

"Witch!" shrieked Penfold. "Flower! Woodfield! Comrades, where are ye? Save me now from sorcery. Hough! Go bring the villagers, and bid them fling this hag into the Thames and pelt her with stones when she rises. To me, comrades! Leave not your old captain to perish by witchcraft."

"Canst heal him from this madness?" muttered Hough. "Myself I dared not let his blood, fearing lest I might do that which should hasten his end."

"Our people let no blood," came the answer. "We bring great heat into the body, so that the evil spirit shall come forth to seek water. Then we strengthen the body, so that it may be able to resist his return."

Already Penfold ceased to struggle beneath her soothing hands. The fires blazed fiercely, the smoke and hot vapours being drawn upwards into the natural chimneys. Obeying instructions, the men placed their sick comrade between these fires and covered him closely, while the skilful healer moistened his brow and lips with water in which she had steeped the young pink bark of the bitter willow, thus wringing the fever out of his body like water from a sponge.

"I am saving the old man," she whispered in a confident voice.

At the end of another hour the limp rag of humanity was steeped in sleep. By then the night was

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strong and the stars little orbs in splendour among the clouds. The breathing which the men heard when Mary Iden rose from her knees might have been that of a little child.

"The evil spirit has been driven forth to find water. Lift the man quickly, for the foul creature travels faster than the moonlight."

Obedient to superior knowledge, the men reconveyed the sleeper to the grass bed, and there the healer roused him to administer a decoction of bruised herbs: serrated calamintha, the perfoliate eupator, later more popularly known as the fever-wort of North America, and the white-rayed pyrethrum, which lifted its bitter bloom upon the heights. The sick man gasped as he swallowed the powerful tonic, and sank back into untroubled rest.

Presently the knight and his wife departed, and Hough accompanied them upon the first stage of their return journey; and when they reached the lake-side, where the canoe sprawled along the shingle, the knight acquainted his fellow-countryman with his plan of departure. Hough listened, gazing dimly over the scintillating surface, where a silver ribbon of moonlight led away to the Isle of Dreams.

"Where lies that land whither you go?" he asked at length.

"In the far east where Sebastian Cabot first touched," the Kentishman replied. "There I may sight the great ocean, which we islanders love, and scent the good brine and watch for an English sail."

"Here there is nothing we may do," said Hough, removing his eyes from the dreamy lake. "There

surely we may look for the ship which Lord Baltimore shall send when Viner comes down to Virginia. I too would be near the sea and smell liberty."

With that they parted, and Hough returned to his hole among the rocks with visions of the sea. Within that cave, where Penfold slept during his guardian's absence, the fires darted, tincturing with red the silver of the moonbeams against the sable wall of cliff. Between the granite and the forest of pines a stream of moonlight spread like a glacier. A figure stole from the black belt, stepped cautiously into the white road, and waded, as it were, through the rippling beams. It was Onawa, who had watched the two men and her sister making west; she knew that one of the men would return after a little interval; and she understood that the work which she had undertaken must be done quickly.

No croaking bird aroused Penfold from his sleep to warn him of the she-wolf. It was one of those ironies which run through life that one sister should have cast the sick man into healthy slumber in order that the other might stab him as he lay.

A cloud of blood-sucking insects trumpeted around Onawa. Their thin noise seemed to her a tumult, and she stopped and looked back along the cold white stream. A lean wolf was slinking in her direction, his muzzle snuffing the dust. She shivered when she remembered that the murderess was doomed to become a werewolf after death to prowl about the scene of her former sin. The creature howled. The pale girl started and ran into the cave.

Her belief remained constant that she might still win the love of La Salle by destroying his enemies.

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She knew that he had gained renown by her betrayal to him of the English settlement. Now he had gone in the great ship to Acadie. She was about to follow, having neither home nor people, being indeed hunted for her life ; but first she might destroy another of his enemies. Then she could learn to say : " I have killed the old Englishman who stirred up my people to attack yours." And she thought that he might welcome her at last for the sake of her good deeds.

A frightened howl broke upon the night. The wolf, disturbed by some enemy of its species, was hurrying for cover. The crisp snapping of twigs, succeeded by a rattling of small stones, were caused, not by the pads of the black loup-garou, but by a body weightier and less cowardly. These sounds were deadened by the walls of rock, and Onawa did not hear them. Swiftly she drew away the coverings from the white-faced sleeper, and old Penfold smiled innocently at her in his drugged sleep. Onawa drew in her breath, unsheathed her knife, and felt its point ; then leaned back, measuring the distance by the faint glow, and her arm went up to strike. That next moment she screamed with terror, turned, struck wildly at the air, and was carried back to the granite floor with Hough's iron fingers driven round her throat.

Step by step the grim Puritan dragged the girl back to the mouth of the cave, and there pinned her to the rock with one arm, while reaching with the other to the corner, where he had piled a rope taken from the deck of the privateer. He bound her hand and foot ; and thus helpless she stared up, and read her death upon his face.

For over an hour Hough paced the floor of the cave, listening to his captain's gentle breathing, and recalling the violent death of Athaliah, slain by order of Jehoiada, and the fate of Jezebel, cast from an upper window at the command of Jehu; for such a man as the Puritan regulated all the actions of his life by the light revealed to him from the Bible. There was, he reasoned, the highest authority to justify the act which he contemplated; only the manhood in him recoiled from the slaying of a woman. At length his mind became fixed. He bent and drew together the scarlet embers of the fire.

Onawa made no sign of terror, and no appeal for mercy; but her eyes followed every movement of her stern captor, as she sought to learn her sentence without betraying her fear.

"The witch is fair," the Puritan muttered, standing over and regarding her fawn-coloured skin, her even features, and large dark eyes. "A woman takes pride in her beauty. May the Lord punish me if I act now unjustly and for vengeance alone."

He pushed a stick into the fire and watched it grow red, then turned sharply upon his victim. The girl's eyes flashed defiance when they met his.

"Behold!" he exclaimed, drawing a thin hand across his terrible face, upon which the Court of Star Chamber had written its unjust judgment. The girl saw the slit nostrils, the cropped ears, the branded cheeks, and the scarred forehead. Her tongue became loosened at that sight, and she prayed for instant death, because she knew it was vain to plead for mercy.

Outside the cave the long black wolf, which if

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native testimony were accepted, contained the soul of some sorcerer, or of some vile man who had slain his friend, crept back to search for scraps of food. As a cloud drifted over the moon the brute dropped a bone which it had snatched, and scurried away like a human thief into the shadows, terrified by a wild scream from within the granite cave.

CHAPTER XXVII.

REVELATION.

HAD Madame Labroquerie continued firm in her resolve never to approach the fortress while her nephew ruled, all might have been well ; but unfortunately for her daughter, and, as it was to prove, for herself, the bitter little woman permitted her longing to enter again into the affairs of the world to prevail over her hatred for the commandant, and so suffered herself to be brought to the citadel, railing savagely throughout the journey. Before a week had passed she revealed herself fully as an unnatural mother and an implacable foe. Yet, to do justice to even a worker of evil, it must be admitted that Madeleine, with all her sweetness, was a sore trial to a fanatical Catholic and bigoted patriot, for she refused to be ashamed of her heresy, and was never weary of singing the praise of her English lover.

Left to themselves, neither Laroche, now the head of the Church in that district, nor Roussilac would have taken action against the lovely sinner ; but Madame, in one of her fits of ungovernable anger, publicly preferred two charges against her daughter, accusing her of heresy and treason, and calling upon the Church to punish her for the one offence and the State to exact a penalty for the other.

These were grave indictments, but both priest and layman closed their ears, the former not wishing to

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be troubled by unpleasant duties, the latter hanging back, not on account of the tie of relationship, but because of Madeleine's beauty. But when Madame, in another fit of fury, openly denounced the commandant before D'Archand, who for the second time had arrived at that coast, as a Lutheran at heart, and a protector of the enemies of the Church, he was driven to act for the sake of his ambition. So Madeleine was arrested and confined in a small stone hut high upon the cliff, and before her door a sentry paced both by day and night, while Laroche, with many deep grumblings, was compelled to undertake the uncongenial task of saving the fair girl's soul.

To the credit of the priest, be it said that he was charitable. He believed Madeleine had been perverted from the right way by some spell of witchcraft, and this belief was strengthened by the fact that, when he adjured the girl by the tears of the Saviour to weep, she merely laughed at him. It was notorious that a guilty witch was unable to shed tears. Accordingly Laroche attended himself to the obvious duty of exorcising the evil spirit which had taken up its abode in her; but, in spite of all his efforts, the girl remained as wickedly obstinate as before.

"The Church acts towards her children with wondrous love, and because of that love may chasten," the abbé preached. "'Tis the duty of the faithful within the fold to bring in the wandering sheep, either by suasion or by force. Being bewitched, my daughter, you stand in great peril, and we, by the powers entrusted unto us, may remove that danger, when reasoning fails, by bodily torment. Be con-

verted, and your soul shall live. Remain in your unbelief, and punishment shall follow, because a living heretic is a danger to the world and a dishonour to the holy saints."

Even such sound doctrine as this failed to move the heart of Madeleine, and each day Laroche grumbled louder at his failure, and Roussilac shrank yet more from bringing his cousin to trial, and Madame became more stinging in speech and more furious in her awful passions, because of the suffering of her mind during lucid moments, when she could see herself in sunny Normandy once more young and sane. Her hatred for Roussilac increased, until she would spit and snarl at him when he passed, and scream: "Infidel! This shall be known in France. Power shall fall from you, and the people shall curse your name." And when the men who had been sent after Geoffrey returned afoot with their tale of failure, Madame Labroquerie made it known from the ship to the citadel that it was the commandant who had secured the spy's safety for the love of his heretic cousin.

Coward as he was in many ways, Roussilac at length saw that he must act or be dishonoured; he must either release Madeleine or bring her to trial for treason. The former alternative was impossible, because the girl was an ecclesiastical prisoner. The lightest sentence he could pass for treason was banishment, and he could not endure the prospect of losing Madeleine. Besides, when he had sentenced her, she still remained to be judged by the clerical court. It needed a wiser brain than Roussilac's to solve so tangled a problem. Nevertheless, he resolved

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to attempt it. After some speech with Laroche, who was heartily weary of the whole business, the commandant passed from the church of Ste. Mary, after the hour of vespers, and ascended the winding path which led towards the hut where the impenitent was imprisoned. The sentry saluted as the governor approached, then resumed his march along the brown scar which the constant tread had made.

"Withdraw yonder," Roussilac ordered.

A happy voice broke out, as he put up his hand to the door :

"There is the sun upon the side of the wall. So it is already evening. Time flies as fast in prison as elsewhere. I pray you, sun, shine upon Geoffrey rather than on me !"

Cribbed and confined as the girl was, she steadily refused to be cast down, because she was assured that life had far better things in store. Her lover was pursued, but then she knew he would escape. Her body might be held in prison, but her spirit was free, flying over forest and hill, and singing like a lark against the clouds.

Her note changed when Roussilac flung open the door and stood before her in a flood of light.

"Cousin," Madeleine said coldly. "You break upon me suddenly. I had better company before you came. Why do you drive my friends away ?"

The commandant closed the door and stepped forward, his sallow face working.

"You are alone," he said. "None dare visit you without permission."

"I am never alone," she declared. "My friends left me when you entered ; but they shall return when you depart."

"Am not I a friend? Nay, more—I am a relation," began Roussilac; but she checked him with the reproof: "I have no family now that Jean-Marie is dead."

"Your mother," he reminded her.

"She has delivered me into the power of the Church."

"Because it is best for you. I would care for your body, Madeleine, as your mother cares for your soul. Cousin, think not unkindly of me. I would release you; but what power have I to remove the judgment of the Abbé Laroche? He has sentenced you to close confinement, until——"

"My lover returns to release me," she finished, and backed from him with a laugh.

Roussilac clenched his fingers tightly, and jealousy venomous the words which then left his lips:

"Foolish girl, would you rouse all the evil in me? Bear with me, cousin," he went on quickly. "It is not in me to endure patiently. Since that day when I stood before you in the grove I have not known the meaning of peace. My nights have been long, my days dark, my position unprofitable——"

Again she interrupted him, to simplify what she knew must follow:

"Because you think that you love me."

He stepped forward to seize her hands; but she drew back and steadied herself against the wall.

"I do love you, sweet cousin."

"You do not love me. Need I give you the lie when your own tongue gives it you? Is it love when the nights become long, and the day dark, and position brings no pleasure? Arnaud, I love, and am

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held in prison ; but my nights are short, my days warm, and my position is a happiness. Believe you that love, however unrequited, takes away from life? I tell you it adds, it enriches, it beautifies. It is a crown which makes a humble man a king, and the halo which makes the singing-girl a saint. Love gives a man strength to use his power, to defy superstition and false religion, to snap his fingers in the face of a fat priest who believes that a strong will may be bent and broken by holding the body in bondage. Had I my heart to offer I would scorn your cowardly love."

He had faced her while she spoke, but when she stopped he turned, and, feeling the sting of her eyes, savagely pulled at the cloak which had drifted from his shoulders.

"My mother has sent you," said Madeleine.

"She and I are bitter enemies," came the sullen answer. "I have but borne with her for your sake. She seeks to stir up mischief all the day long." He turned abruptly. "Have you no kind word for me, little cousin?"

He looked worn and old, and the girl pitied him ; but she was too honest to deceive by fair speech.

"You brought me to this place against my will," she reminded him. "I was happy in our cabin beyond the river. You have played into the hands of my mother, who desires to see me punished because I have abjured her faith. Would you have brought me here had you found the plain country maid you had looked to see?"

"I swore to your brother to protect you."

"Do not recall that death scene, I pray you," she

said firmly. "If the spirit of Jean-Marie looks down upon us now, he finds you—protecting me!"

Roussilac winced as that shot struck him. "Blame me not," he said more submissively. "Were you a civil prisoner only, I would open this door, and you should go as free as air. My purpose in coming to you is to urge you to free yourself."

"Never at the price demanded. Arnaud, I put your courage to the test. I trow that the man who loves a woman will for her sake perform what she may demand, even though he lose position for it. Open the door, and lead me to Father Laroche, and say to him: 'Father, I have taken it upon myself to release your prisoner, since it shames me to see flesh and blood of mine confined against her will in the fortress over which I rule.' Do so, Arnaud, and I shall believe in you."

"It is madness to ask it," said Roussilac loudly.

"Let us have the truth. You dare not."

"It is so," he confessed. "I dare not set myself against the Church, which has the power to consign a man's soul to hell."

Madeleine smiled contemptuously.

"If you would search your heart and read truly what there you find, I should hear a different answer. You do not fear Father Laroche. He does not wish to hold me here. Rather would he cast me from his mind, that he might have more time to spend at the tavern and his brawls. I will tell you what you fear: your actions are watched, your words criticised. If you let me free, it would be rumoured that you were false to the faith. That rumour would be wafted across seas, and your enemies at home would see to it

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that you were recalled and relegated to the obscurity from which you have arisen. You would rather treat your cousin as a courtesan than abate one fragment of the pitiful power which shall some day fall from your body like a rag. Now, my commandant, are you answered?"

Roussilac said not a word when he saw the scorn in those violet eyes. He merely put out his hand, and opened the door, muttering, as though to himself: "That pride shall break when she knows."

"Know?" cried Madeleine. "What should I know?"

He looked at her savagely, feeling that it was in him to make her suffer.

"That your lover is hanged at my command."

He closed the door quickly and fastened it, half hoping, half dreading, to hear the scream of anguish which he believed must follow. But there came to him as he waited a peal of joyous laughter, and the happy words:

"Geoffrey, Geoffrey! would that you could hear that! Dead! Why, my love, you are full of life. Were you to die, which God indeed forbids, your dear spirit would fly at once to me. Dead! Have I not seen you in my dreams? Do not I see you now walking within sight of the New England fields? Oh, Geoffrey! Near—how near! Who is that great man riding beside you, a panther skin across his shoulder? How noisily he talks . . . and now leans over, and pats you on the arm. Ah, gone—gone! And he would have me think that you are hanged!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BODY AND MIND.

ROUSSILAC strode towards the river, and in that hour found it in his heart to envy the meanest settler in the land. Like many a man who has risen from the ranks, he found himself destitute of friends. He had cut himself off from his own relations, lest they should hinder his ascent, and none had come to take their place; the captains of noble birth, his official equals, having refused to receive into friendship the son of a Normandy farmer. The home government was but using what military talents he possessed to their advantage; and when his services had been rendered, he would be cast aside by the proud priest who ruled the destinies of France, and another chosen in his stead.

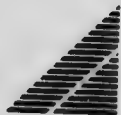
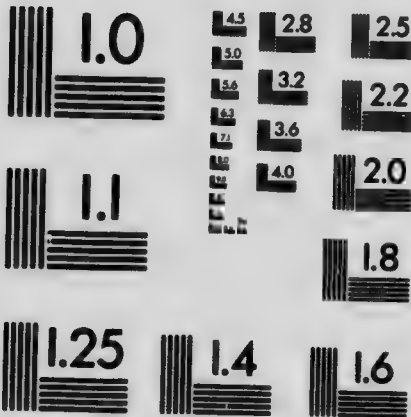
"Courage!" he muttered. "'Tis but imagination which makes a weakling of me. I will to D'Archand, and inquire of him whether or no my name be yet in favour. Then to stand up like a man, and sweep away my enemies, let them be priests, relations, or demons."

D'Archand was idling upon deck, but at a word from the commandant entered his curtained cabin and produced a flask of Burgundy as an aid to conversation. First Roussilac sought to hear more particularly the news of the world, and induced the master to expatiate upon the revolution of the Scottish



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Covenanters, the struggle of Charles for money and ships, the resolute stand of John Pym for just law, the prosperity of France under Richelieu, and the breaking of the short treaty between that country and Holland. D'Archand warmed to his discourse under the influence of the wine and a thrill of patriotism, as he concluded: "I have but recently crossed the high seas without sighting a hostile vessel. The Dutch privateers have gone home empty. The English coffers are bare. France now holds the world. I drink to the Cardinal and our King."

Abstractedly Roussilac lifted his glass. When the master leaned over and emptied the flask between them, the commandant observed, with an assumption of indifference: "Didst hear any word of praise for my work in this land?"

"My stay was short," D'Archand answered. "I heard no talk of you, commandant—at least, not upon the streets, and to be spoken of in the street is the only fame, I take it. But there were rumours afloat regarding the Abbé La Salle."

"Perdition!" muttered Roussilac. "Shall these priests never confine themselves to their own affairs?"

"Your princes of the Church are statesmen now rather than priests," said the master. "The Abbé La Salle comes of a renowned family. 'Twas said that he is wasted in this colony. I also heard it said—accept the rumour as you will—that his Holiness has set a cross against his name."

"What means that?" asked the commandant hastily.

"Urbano the Eighth, who, I may tell you, has recently bestowed the title of Eminence upon his Car-

dinals, having suitably enriched his family and acquired the Duchy of Urbino, now seeks strong men, priests who are fighters rather than scholars, to aid him in the execution of his plans, and he who has the cross set against his name may be assured of sudden promotion. A canon of Notre Dame, who is much in favour with Cardinal Richelieu, informed me that La Salle may immediately be recalled. His Holiness will raise a parish priest to the cardinalate, through the grades of canon, dean, and bishop, in a month or less, according to his necessity for that man's help."

"The *St. Wenceslas* now bears for home with my despatches," said Roussilac moodily. "I have mentioned the abbé as instrumental in holding heretics at bay."

"His Holiness loves a fighter," muttered D'Archand significantly, as he opened another flask of Burgundy.

A light glimmered here and there when Roussilac made his way homeward, and the murmur of the forest brushed his ears as he passed. The news of another man's advancement hurt his selfish nature as though it were a premonition of his own failure. He hesitated where the path split, then hastened to his house, entered, and immediately found himself in the presence of his aunt, who awaited his coming, knitting her fingers in the lamplight.

"So!" she snapped, her little face hard and wrinkled like a sour apple. "We have now open treachery at headquarters. Treachery against Church and State. You, the representative of the King, the upholder of the faith! You shall be stripped of your

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power and be disgraced. And I will walk a hundred miles barefoot, if there be need, to see sentence executed upon you."

Her attack was ill-timed. The commandant was then in no mood to bear with a mutinous subject, though she had been his own mother.

"Out of my sight," he said fiercely. "Out, I say. Madame, my forbearance is at an end, and I will be obeyed. Would you have me forget that you are a woman and a relative?"

"Since you have forgot your duty to God and the King, forget that also," screamed the little woman. "Seducer, what have you done with my daughter? Where have you hidden her? Abductor! You shall learn what it means to defy Holy Church. Tell me, where have you taken her?"

Roussilac's anger cooled at that, and he lowered his voice as he answered: "I left my cousin not three hours ago in the place where she is confined as an impenitent by the judgment of the Abbé Laroche. There you shall find her."

"Arnaud," shrieked Madame, "deceive your men, cheat a priest, you may, but you shall not so prevail upon me. I know your deeds and the vileness of your heart. As a child you were ever false; as a man you hated your own people, because you had risen and they remained obscure; and now you stand before the mother of the girl whose heart you have helped to harden, whom you have taken and hidden for your own purpose, and ask her what she means when she demands to know the truth."

"If you have information, I will in my official capacity hear it," Roussilac answered. "But forget

not that my nature can be fiercer than yours, and do not tempt my power."

"Your power!" sneered Madame. "It has already departed from you. I thank you, Arnaud, for having disowned your honest family. How ill the cloak of innocence lies upon your shoulders! Madeleine's cell stands empty, as you know well. Beside the door the sentry lies stabbed through the heart, murdered by your hand as surely as though you yourself had driven home the dagger. I have but come from there, and none know what has been done, save you the doer, and I the accuser."

Roussilac caught up his cloak, and wrapped it about his shoulders. "What took you to her prison?" he demanded, his own nature being no less suspicious than hers.

Madame laughed furiously.

"You are a brave rogue, Arnaud. You plot, and murder, and seduce, and smile through it all, and act the innocent like a mime. Know that Father St Agapit came to me—a haughty priest, with no respect for age—to recommend that Madeleine should be entrusted to his care, that he might obtain her conversion by a new method. 'Let her not be crossed,' quoth he. 'Tis human nature to offend more deeply in the front of opposition. I would let her go free, and win her by gentle persuasion to the fold.' What does a priest know of the pride of a girl's heart? 'Is the branch broken by persuasion for the fire?' said I. 'No, you shall take it in hand strongly and break it by force.' To that the abbé said, 'You shall not compare the inanimate thing with the living creature whom God has gifted with free-will. Go now to her

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and be gentle. Try her with mother's milk rather than with the strong meat of human nature. I have bidden the sentry admit you.' So I went to win my erring child as the priest taught me, for I never yet have disobeyed a Churchman, and what I found you know."

"You are right, Madame, if what you say be true," said Roussilac sternly. "There is treachery here."

"Behold my hand! It points at the traitor," screamed the pale woman, her fury surging back upon her. "You shall not escape with your fellow-sinner. You shall not go from me until I hear from your own lips where you have placed Madeleine, my child."

"Woman, I know nothing," he snarled. "Is my position nothing to me that I should play so loosely?"

A cry of animal rage broke that instant from his throat. Madame had dashed upon him, and, before he could beat her back, had clawed his face like a maddened bird from cheek-bones to chin.

At that terrible indignity the pusillanimous spirit of the commandant was sobered into resolution. He hurled her back screaming, and put up a hand to his burning face. The finger-tips came away reddened.

He shivered from head to foot. Madame was raving. Roussilac steadied himself, then walked from that place, a cold, sinister figure, the howling of the mad woman pealing into his ears.

Scarce a minute had elapsed before he returned, accompanied by two soldiers; and again facing Madame Labroquerie, whose bloodless face was distorted with the fury of her terrible nature, issued his orders in a pitiless voice:

"Secure that woman, and keep her in ward this night." He raised his hand, and smiled vengefully at the marks on his fingers, as he drew off his ring, which he extended to the man nearest him with the words: "Take your authority. Spare not force, if force be wanted. Restore this ring to me after sunrise, when you shall have hanged this woman upon the eastern side of the fortress."

Again Roussilac smiled, and, turning quickly, passed outside. One terrible scream made him lift his hands to his ears, then he hurried up the steep path, to see with his own eyes the cold body of the sentry, and the empty cell, and to learn that Madame had not lied.

For a few moments he stood, like a man in a trance, seeing indeed his problem solved, but knowing that Madeleine was lost to him. He turned to the dead body, and commanded it to speak; and when he understood that the spirit had passed for ever from his discipline, he spurned the cold matter with his foot, and in a fury cried: "I would give my position and all I have to hear this dead man speak."

"Listen, then," said a cold voice. "The dead are not silent." And Roussilac cried out with superstitious fear, then started, when he beheld a tall figure proceeding from the shadow of the doorway, and recognised St Agapit, the priest.

"Who has done this?" he demanded. "What lover of this girl has dared to enter the fortress, to stab one of my guards, and carry her off beneath my eye?"

"I am no reader of riddles," said St Agapit. "I came here to reason with the maid, because it seemed

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to me that her heart, young as it is and tender, must surely respond to the message of love. Why she refuses the only faith by which mortals may be saved passed my understanding. But now I know that she has been driven into heresy by the neglect of a father and the unnatural spirit of a mother, and strengthened in her sin by the persecution of a cousin."

"Father, I loved her."

"Not so. You shall find at your heart passion, but not the warmth of love. It is not the ice which produces the plant and the flower. It is the warm rain and the sunshine. You offered her the storm, and wondered because she desired the sun."

"Where has she gone?" cried the blind man.

"To freedom. My blessing follows her, unbeliever though she be."

The ascetic moved forward, thin and stern, and made the sign of the cross over the fallen sentry.

"Bless me also," cried Roussilac, catching at his skirt. "Father, I have done much evil. Bless me before you go."

"I may pity where I may not bless," said St Agapit, and passed with that same dignified step which awed the Iroquois into silence when on a distant day they led him out to die. His shadow flickered once upon the slope, went out, and the governor was alone with the dead.

The soldiers who had been left to execute their commander's unnatural order glanced fearfully at one another, and he who held the ring muttered a charm against the evil eye. That cry of impotent rage, which had caused Roussilac to stop his ears, fell from the lips of Madame Labroquerie so soon as her mind

caught the meaning of her sentence ; and when the men at length advanced to take her, she writhed and bit the air, and hurled after her nephew words of execration which caused the soldiers to draw back and cross themselves in terror. All the hate and madness of the unhappy woman's ruined mind poured forth in one awful torrent, until she sank to the floor and settled there to silence.

Then the men took courage to seize her, believing that the blood which they saw issuing from her mouth was produced by the wounds which her own teeth had inflicted ; but when the body fell limp in their arms they realised that nature had intervened.

One at the head, the other at the feet, they carried through the night the silent shape of Madame Labroquerie, who was never to move, never to rave, again. Yet so blindly obedient to their officer's word of command were these men in the ranks, that they carried the body out and executed sentence upon it an hour after sunrise in the valley of St. Charles.

At that same hour rumour went about the fortress—set in motion by a sentry, who had seen the governor rushing down to the forest during the night—to the effect that Roussilac was lying under a spell of witchcraft. This rumour became an established fact when the Abbé Laroche was seen proceeding from the church upon the hill with asperges brush and a shell of holy water.

"Such is the end of ambition," murmured St Agapit, when they had brought him the evil tidings. "Can a clay body resist free spirits of the dead?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

WOMAN'S LOVE IS LIFE.

BEFORE we leave the fortress, to return thither no more, a glance must be taken at Madeleine, evading the power of the Church and the secular arm, escaping from the mother who had grown to hate her and the cousin who had not courage to shield her. Her rescuer was not a man—if it be true that man was made in the image of God—yet his actions upon that night went far to prove that he owned a human heart.

So soon as Roussilac had gone from his cousin's sight for ever, the tramp of the sentry's feet began again beating out the seconds like a clock. The girl was unable to see the soldier, but at regular intervals his shadow blackened the cracks along the door, and sometimes she heard him growl when a lance-point pricked his neck. Life became strangely mechanical as she lay half-asleep, her eyes opening and closing at intervals, her ears half unconsciously admitting the sounds of the outer world, her body subdued for the time and yielding to languor. But soon she stirred, hearing voices outside her cell. A grating laugh hurt her nerves, and after it came the order of the sentry calling on some unwelcome visitant to depart. Then the heavy tramp sounded monotonously again.

"Would rather be a toad gnawing the root of a tree, than a machine to pace a dozen yards of grass,"

taunted an ugly voice. "Admit me into the hut, Sir Sentry. Know you I have this day been ordained a priest of Holy Church, and 'tis my duty to reason with the fair impenitent. Shall defy me, rascal? I can mutter a spell that shall knock the sword from your hand and shake your body with ague."

"Begone!" muttered the soldier. "I talk with none while on my duty."

Madeleine stirred uneasily. Something fell lightly against her arm, and she looked up to the aperture which made a window. Nothing unusual met her eyes; but when she moved again a soft odour brushed her face, and her delighted hand caught up a bunch of wild bush roses.

"I go." The fully aroused girl felt that the hideous voice was intended for her ears. "There is no moon to-night, and after dark, when none shall see, I will be here to ease your duty by a song of roses and woman's love, brave comrade. Mayhap I shall then meet with a less churlish welcome."

"That may be," answered the soldier sullenly. "Another shall have taken my place. Sing to him if you will."

"O the lovely flowers!" murmured Madeleine. The doors had opened since noon and their yellow hearts were wet, because the gatherer had dipped each one into the river, before tying them together with a blade of scented grass.

She brushed these sweet companions against her cheek, wondering who could have dared to show himself her friend. The time passed happily while she waited in tinging expectancy for the coming of dark.

First came I. roche, full of bluster and talk of the

wickedness of self-will, of the fate of the unbeliever in the next world, and the punishment of the heretic in this. The abbé had employed the afternoon in putting an edge to his sword with his own clerical hands, and his mind was fully occupied with the fineness of the bright steel and the excellence of the point while he talked.

"We must save a soul from the everlasting burning," he said with menace, as he made to depart. "When the body is put to pain the mind is said to yield with wondrous readiness, and there is joy in Heaven over the sinner that repenteth. Impenitence in one so young is surely the work of the devil. The power of exorcism has been conferred upon the priests of Holy Church. Pray to our Lady and the saints, daughter, that they strengthen you for the ordeal."

Laroche swaggered out conscious of having well performed an unpleasant duty, and hurried down to the street of fishermen, to convince himself that Michel had not again dared to adulterate his wine.

After vespers came St Agapit. He had spent the day over his manuscripts, endeavouring to unravel some of the perplexities of the human mind. The ascetic was liberal beyond his time. He regarded Madeleine as rather an object for pity than for punishment. Her brain had been worked upon and her mind possessed by some spirit of darkness; and it became his duty to deliver her from the benumbing influence and to point out to her the way of life.

But when he came to leave the stone hut, he was for the first moment in his life a doubter. Madeleine had spoken with such happiness of the joy of life; had held out to his colourless face her blushing rose-

buds, bidding him note that their smell was as fragrant to her the Protestant as to him the Catholic; had dwelt upon her faith, which was pure and perfect even though it excluded the aid of saints and the help of the Mother of God. And thus had she answered his final argument:

"In the free country birds would surround me, and each one had its own way of showing me affection. One would peck at my gown, another caress me with its wings, another, too shy to approach, would sit on a bough and sing as best it could. But I loved them all, and the shyest the best. Father, if the birds have each a different way of showing us love, may not we, who are better than many sparrows, be allowed to worship God after our own different promptings?"

St Agapit blessed her less sternly than usual, and returned perplexed to his studies, there to search for proof of what Madeleine had said, praying like the holy man he was for light and understanding. Reluctantly he was compelled to admit that it was an evil spirit which had spoken to him out of the mouth of Madeleine. So he went into his little chapel and prayed for her and for himself that the doubt of his heart might be forgiven him.

But in years to come, after those days when the Islanders had stirred up the Iroquois to avenge their wrongs, a sachem of the Oneidas would narrate the story of the death of the white doctor, dwelling upon those last moments when the priest had turned to him to say: "Tell me, is it true that you worship the sun?"

"Surely," answered the sachem. "For the sun is our life."

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"In worshipping the sun," cried the exultant priest, "you have surely worshipped the one God."

And over the horde of bloodthirsty natives, who were preparing his fiery torment, St Agapit made the sign of the cross.

Evening came, soft and fragrant, with a rush of sweet wind when the door opened to admit food and drink for the prisoner. Madeleine caught a glimpse of the sentry who took up his post after the proclamation of the evening gun; a thick-set man, swarthy and black-bearded, a Cyclops in appearance, but a Cerberus for watchfulness, as the girl knew; for once, when she had timidly tried the door, the brute had growled at her like a dog.

Darker grew the air. Madeleine stood against the wall, listening to the rush of water far beneath, the drone of beetles, and the scarcely audible murmur from the heart of the fortress. The last beam went out, the tired day was asleep, and Cerberus tramped, growling out his thoughts.

It became so dark that the walls disappeared. Clouds hung low, dark as the under-world; the stars were blotted out; not a gleam of phosphorus nor a smoky ray shot upward from the north. The land whirled blackly into space.

Madeleine moved her forehead from the cold stone and sighed softly. She crept to her bed and sat shivering gently, holding fast her treasured blooms. The night damp had revived the flowers and drawn out their odour, so that the girl pleased herself with the fancy that she was sitting in a rose-bower.

She heard the screech of an owl far away, the rattle and splash of oars, the running out of a chain,

the snap of a belated locust. She heard the ticking of an insect in the walls; and she heard the growl of Cerberus:

"A plague upon that ghost-light!"

She heard a sound which made her shiver, though it might have been nothing more than a heavy foot struck sharply upon the turf; but hardly had the thrill passed when a gasp and a great groan made the dark night wild, and the hill-top and every stone in the building seemed to jar as the ground was smitten. The silence that followed was unbroken by the solemn tramp which had become a part of the girl's life. The human clock was broken.

Then a subdued voice began to sing, harsh and unmusical, straining to be sympathetic, and its song was of peace and love in an old-world garden. Harsher grew the voice, though the effort to be tender underlay each note.

"Friend," whispered Madeleine

The song was stilled.

"Oh, friend, open the door and let me feel the air."

"Prepare your eyes for a hideous sight," muttered the voice, dull and grating like a saw.

"My deliverer cannot make me fear," she murmured.

The iron bolt grated, the door opened, and Madeleine beheld in the gloom the shapeless outline of the dwarf.

"Thank the night, lady," he said. "It is kind because it hides one of nature's failures. A spider, they say, once saved a Scotchman. A hunchback may do as much for a queen."

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Madeleine stepped out to the balmy night.

"What made you come to my aid?" she murmured. "It is death for you."

"Lady," said Gaudriole, "I bow to the Church, because hypocrisy drives many a sinner to play the saint. When the fat Laroche calls me to my duty, I confess with my tongue in my cheek and burn a rushlight. That is for policy. Before you I am a Protestant. By myself I am a believer in living long and cheating the gallows. That again is policy. I hate the Church and its priests, therefore I have released you. Also, by some strange mischance, nature has placed a man's heart within this contemptible body. But let us hasten."

"The sentry!" exclaimed Madeleine.

"Look not in that direction," said Gaudriole.

"Lady, which way? I will guide you to safety, stay by your side while I can serve you, and when you say, 'Back, dog!' I disappear."

"You have done murder," cried the girl. "Let me see. Stand aside. Ah, poor wretch! He was but doing his duty, and his blood is on my head."

"The deed is mine, both in this world and the next," said Gaudriole. "I had a grudge against the knave. He stunned me once with his fist when I stumbled by mischance across his foot. Lady, you must come quickly. I see lights moving yonder. There is no time to lose."

"Geoffrey!" murmured Madeleine softly to herself.

"For his sake," urged the dwarf. Then he paused and ground his teeth.

"But you?" she exclaimed.

"I!" Gaudriole uttered his malevolent chuckle. "To-morrow I shall be hopping about the fortress, full of wild fancies which shall mightily impress the superstitious. I shall say how, as I lay on the hill-side, I saw lightning strike the sentry dead, and how at the roll of thunder the door of this hut burst open and you passed out in a flame of fire. Laroche shall worship you as a saint to-morrow, if he worship aught but his belly and his sword, and shall keep the day holy in honour of Sainte Madeleine. Fear not for me. I have a clever tongue, lady, and a brave imagination, and if I am pushed can devise twenty men to do this deed. Come!" he whispered sharply. "The lights approach."

Madeleine permitted herself to be hurried away, and the ill-matched pair made no stop until the forest had closed behind. Not a sound came from the heights; only the watch-fires flickered gently in the wind.

"Which way?" cried Gaudriole.

"The sea," said Madeleine.

"There lies your path. 'Tis a mountainous country yonder. If you hide to-night, I will after dark to-morrow bring down a boat, and in that you may escape."

"I know how to find food, and the Indians will not harm me," she replied. "I have made myself friendly with them, and carry a marked stone which one of their sachems gave me."

"Say now the words, 'Back, dog!' and I leave you."

Madeleine turned reluctantly to the dwarf.

"Go, friend," she said, with her pitying smile

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Gaudriole went down on his sharp knees, and his crooked shoulders heaved.

"Lady, I am no man, but a beast who has done you what little service it might. My life shall continue as nature has fitted me, but when I come to die on the gallows, as such as I must end, I would have one blessed memory to carry with me into hell. Suffer me to kiss your hand."

Madeleine hesitated, her lips parting pitifully, her eyes wet as the grass which brushed her skirt. Then, as the poor villain raised his hideous face, she bent and swiftly kissed his grimy brow. Her glorious hair for a moment streamed upon his elfin locks, then she was gone, breathing a little faster, while Gaudriole lay humped upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXX.

LAND-LOCKED.

WITH the life of Master William Grignion, alderman, and subsequently sheriff, of the City of London, these annals are not concerned. The merchant's existence cannot, however, be altogether ignored, owing to a certain venture on his part, which resulted in an English ship being cast upon the shore of Acadie at the beginning of winter. Master Grignion was an austere man, who, by dint of miserly practice and sharp dealing, had amassed what in those days was a considerable fortune. After marrying his only daughter to an impecunious peer, he occupied a shameful old house upon Thames bank, the greater part of which was stocked with bales of merchandise. From the single window of the living-room, which was furnished below the degree of discomfort, the old man could view the overtopping houses upon London Bridge; and here Master Grignion counted his gains each night, while his starved dog slunk from corner to corner sniffing uselessly for a scrap of food.

Owing to the scarcity of English ships, no valuable cargo of tobacco, and none of the products of New World grist-mills or tanneries, had for many months crossed the seas. For weeks the alderman had been engrossed by an idea, which grew in strength upon him—namely, that if he built for himself a ship and despatched her to Virginia, he might very possibly

add materially to the already considerable store of gold pieces which were secreted about his house from cellar to attic. But Master Grignion knew well that the seas were held by England's foes, and the nightmare of failure held him back from his project month after month. One evening, however, while he watched the muddy Thames after a good day of business, the finger of inspiration touched him, and, gazing up into the London sky, which was not murky in those days, he remarked: "Hitherto ships have been constructed for strength. Dutch, French, and Spanish vessels are alike slow and cumbersome. It has occurred to no man to build a ship for speed."

Having solved the problem, Master Grignion knew no rest until he had found an enterprising ship-builder, who was clever at his business and at the same time weak in bargaining. Discovering in Devon the man he required, the alderman divulged his plan; and from that day forward until the *Dartmouth* stood fully decked before Barnstaple the miser's talk was of sailcloth and sailmaking, with masts, yards, gaffs, booms, and bowsprits. The *Dartmouth*, when completed even to the satisfaction of her avaricious owner, was undoubtedly ahead of the time.

One Silas Upcliff, an old sea-dog with a face red and yellow like a ripe apple, and a fringe of snow-white whisker below the chin, a native of Plymouth, and a man well salted by experience, volunteered to raise a crew and sail the *Dartmouth* to the Potomac; and, after a vast deal of haggling over the questions of provisioning and wages, his offer was accepted. And one fine day the brigantine shook out her wealth of canvas and skimmed away westward, over the track

of such brave vessels as the *Pelican*, the little *Discovery*, and the Puritan *Mayflower*. Trembling with pride and excitement, and a certain amount of fear lest at the last moment his ship might be seized for the service of the king, Master Grignion stood by while the anchor was heaved, shouting his final injunction : "Fight not with your guns, Master Skipper. Should an enemy attack you, let out more sail and fly." Silas Upcliff nodded in stolid English style, and, as he drew away, turned to his mate and muttered : "From the French, the storm, but most of all from misers, good Lord deliver us."

From the French the *Dartmouth* was indeed delivered, but not from the storm. Hostile vessels were sighted, but the brigantine's speed enabled her to show a particularly dainty stern to these privateers ; and all went well with her until the line of the American coast lifted ominously distinct above the horizon before being blotted out by a mass of fiery cloud. Then came the storm, which flung the little vessel far from her course, carried her northwards, and finally cast her upon the coast of Nova Scotia, after failing in its effort to wreck her on the western spurs of Newfoundland. When the storm ceased, a freezing calm set in, and for two days snow descended without intermission. Upcliff gave the order to build a house out of pine logs, where he and his men might take shelter while they repaired the ship ; for the little *Dartmouth* had been terribly strained by the storm and pierced by the sharp-toothed rocks. The skipper believed that he was near his destined harbour, and was sorely puzzled by the snow and bitter cold ; but, when a sailor came hurriedly to report that he had

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seen the smoke of a distant settlement and a tree stamped with the fleur-de-lys, the captain began to greatly fear that the miserly alderman had lost his venture, and he bade his men bring out their cutlasses and to see that they were sharp.

When the snow ceased and the atmosphere became clear, a tall figure came down among the pines, and gave a hearty welcome to the skipper and his men. The visitor was Sir Thomas Iden, and he came not alone to greet the master of the *Dartmouth*, for none other than Madeleine was at his side.

The brave girl had travelled far that night of her release, and for two days hurried eastward, keeping near the river, existing on butternuts and the different kinds of berry which flourished in abundance at that season of the year, until on the eve of the second day she saw the smoke of a camp-fire rising from the beach. Descending, she revealed herself boldly to the campers, who were none other than Sir Thomas and his native wife; and when the former heard her story, and knew that she was English at heart, if French in name, and further learnt that she was the affianced of Geoffrey Viner, who had gone out to bring them help, he bent with knightly grace and kissed her hand, and besought her to accompany him to the land above the sea. Madeleine joyously consented; and from that hour her troubles ceased.

Afterwards Jeremiah Hough came to the land beside the gulf, and with him Penfold, fully recovered from his fever; and these men also took Madeleine to their hearts—though the stern Puritan refused to trust her—when they heard how she had served their comrade. In the pathless land above the sea, a little

to the east of Acadie, they settled themselves; the knight, his wife, and Madeleine in one log-cabin in a hollow; Hough and Penfold in another, placed in the heart of a dense pine-wood. No marauding band had been abroad to trouble the land. The only danger which appeared to threaten the Englishmen, now that winter had set in, was the possibility that some Indian spy might carry the news of their hiding-place into the town; and this danger was a very real one, for, though they did not know of it, Onawa had followed La Salle to Acadie.

It was Madeleine who sighted the *Dartmouth* snowed up beside the beach. She had gone out into the storm to run along the cliff and fight against the mighty buffetings of the wind which had upset the plans of Master Grignon. She sped back over the spruce-clad hills, and coming first to the adventurers' hut stopped to tell them the tidings. They ran forth, flushed with the hope that Geoffrey had succeeded, and, standing upon a hill-top, argued concerning the stranger's nationality, until they came regretfully to the decision that she could not be from English shores.

"I saw never a ship so light in build," said Penfold. "See you the number of her masts? She is made to run and not to fight, whereas our English ships are made to fight and never to run. She is, if I mistake not, a Dutch vessel."

"Peradventure the Lord shall deliver her also into our hands," quoth Hough fervently.

The captain shook his grizzled head, and answered sadly: "Recall not that day of our triumph. Then were we five good men. Now George, our brother, lies on the Windy Arm, and friend Woodfield is no

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more, and young Geoffrey has gone out into a strange country. Only you and I remain, and my arm now lacks its former strength."

In the meantime Madeleine had run for her protector; and before the day was done both Penfold and the Puritan knew of their error, and had joined hands once again with men from their native land.

When Silas Upcliff learnt that he stood upon the perilous Nova Scotian coast, he felt more shame than fear—shame to hear that the land was mastered by the French. Had not those bold sea-brothers of England the Cabots discovered it over a century earlier, and had not James the First conferred his crown patent of the whole of Canada upon Sir William Alexander, his Scottish favourite? The honest skipper well knew that the magnanimous Charles had confirmed the bestowal of that prodigious gift, acting, it must be assumed, under surprising ignorance, seeing that the land was no more his to give than were the New Netherlands or Peru. And at that time, when Roussilac held the St. Lawrence and La Salle the priest ruled Acadie, the Scottish peer, who was nominal lord of all the land, was peacefully engaged in writing mediocre poetry in his castle of Stirling! Between the ostensible and actual ownership spread a vast gulf of difference, as the men upon that shore were to learn to their cost.

Silas Upcliff gave his compatriots a sailor's hearty handshake, and the men who knew the land and its occupants rendered the new-comers what assistance they might, while Hough lost no time in begging them to join in an attack upon Acadie. To that Upcliff could only make the reply: "My services are

bought, my ship is armed for defence only, and my men are sworn to run rather than to fight."

Then Madeleine offered her services as housewife to the crew, and when the men knew that she loved an English lad, that she was a Huguenot, and had formerly trodden the streets and lanes of Somerset and Devon, that she even knew the familiar names above merchants' doors in Bristol and Plymouth, and could quote them with a pretty accent, they fell in love with her forthwith, from Upcliff himself to the rogue of a boy before the mast. From that time forth she ruled them with a velvet discipline, joining the workers engaged in repairing the ship's injuries, and helping them by her happiness and approval.

"Hurry! hurry!" she would cry. "Ah, but you talk too much. She shall float to-morrow. Then to break the ice and flee away!"

"Art in such hurry to lose us, lass?" said Upcliff on the second day after the snow.

"But I shall not lose you," cried Madeleine. "I am going to sail away with you. I shall bring good fortune and favouring winds; and if any man be sick I will nurse him back to strength. None ever die whom I watch over. The sick are ashamed even to think of death when they see me so full of life. You will take me to my Geoffrey, in the land of the free?"

"Ay, and to England if you will," cried the hearty skipper, who had already heard her story. "But, my lass, your Geoffrey may be on his way back, and you may but get south to find him gone."

"No," replied Madeleine, shaking her head decidedly. "He is not on his way back. I think he is in trouble. I cannot understand, but I feel that he

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is being punished for what he has not done, and I know that I can help him. No one can help a man like the woman who loves him. Geoffrey wants me, and I must go."

"You shall go, girl," promised the sea-dog; and, turning half aside, muttered: "If the boy have played her false, I shall have it in my mind to run out a line from the cross-tree and see him hanged."

"False!" cried Madeleine, with a scream of laughter. "Is the sun false when the clouds will not let him shine? Why, I would slap your wicked face, and cook you no supper to-night, if I believed that you spoke in faith."

She ran away, kicking up the dusty snow, and throwing back a laugh which filled the winter air with the breath of spring.

Each calm morning the boats of the deep-sea fishermen put out from Acadie, and returned before evening with their frozen freight. The Englishmen stifled their fires and stilled their voices when these boats drew near. Their shelter was well hidden among the pines; the snowed-up brigantine resembled nothing so much as a rock bearing a few dead and stripped firs. Every night the sailors laughed at danger; but each morning found them on the watch.

A week passed without event, until the evening of the eighth day arrived and found the sailors packed within their log-hut at the back of the ice-bound bay awaiting the call to supper. The three adventurers were also present as the skipper's guests. The cabin was warm and well lighted, equipped by the men's handiness with nautical furniture from their ship. From the region beyond a curtain, which divided the

interior, came the smell of cookery and the joyful roaring of a fire. A feeling of security was upon the company, because snow-clouds were rolling up outside and the gulf was filled with fog. As night drew on these grey clouds appeared to melt into feathers innumerable, and the pines became snow-steeple, and the rocks huge beds of down. The brigantine was locked within a sheet of ice, and that mysterious silence which had so terrified Cabot the pioneer held all the land in thrall. But the Englishmen cared for none of these things. They knew that the colony of Acadie was being buried in the snow; the unknown coast had no terrors; nor did they fear the black winter sea which southwards groaned and tossed. So they gave each other good cheer, and listened to Upcliff, who beguiled them with reminiscences of his seafaring life until his throat was dry. Then he paused to refresh himself with a rolled tobacco-leaf, and his sailors broke the silence which ensued by singing melodiously a soft musical chanty, which recalled to the mind of each his free and happy life upon the main and the rollicking days ashore. This song also stirred into activity a memory which lay latent in the skipper's mind.

"I saw the man who made that verse," he said, leaning over the circle, and putting out his hand for silence. "Will tell you where I saw him. 'Twas on London street beside Globe Theatre, coming by Blackfriars, and he stood with another honest gentleman watching us wild fellows roll past. We were singing like boys on the road from school and making the fat watchmen run. London town was a brave place for us young sailors up from the West Country.

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and we were bent on having our pleasure, though we had to pay for it before my Lord Mayor."

"What was the name of master?" asked one of the men.

"A comely gentleman," went on the captain, disregarding the questioner. "Though methinks as pale as any wench who had lost her lover. Not a wrinkle on the face of him, and the forehead of him wide and smooth, ay, and as cold looking as any slab of stone from Portland cliff. But the eyes of man! I caught the look of them, and they seemed to pass through my brain learning in one glance more about me than ever I knew myself. And the smile of man! Can see it now as he turned to his fellow and said: 'The sailor is the man to drive our care away, good Burbage.' And then he said softly those words you have now been singing, 'One foot in sea and one on shore, To one thing constant never.' A Christian gentleman, they told me. A great actor, and a poet who made money, they told me. Should watch his 'Tempest' played. Would make you feel on shipboard, and hold on to a pillar of the pit to steady your feet withal."

"He loved a mariner," said a voice. "The Englishman smells of salt water, say they in France. 'Tis better, so honest Will did say, than to smell of civet."

"How goes the weather?" demanded the captain suddenly.

"Snowing. Our little barque is but a drift."

The sailor who had sought to learn the poet's name repeated his question, and while the information was being driven into his obtuse head by half a dozen of

his mates in concert, the curtain dividing the cabin became suddenly agitated, a white hand fluttered for an instant, and a bright voice called :

"Your food is ready, children."

The sailors rose, laughing as heartily at the pleasantry as though they had not heard it before, and obeyed the summons gladly. To every man was set a great bowl of stew, and the fair cook, resting her hands upon her sides, watched them as they set to work.

"You are idle," she declared. "I have but little meat left, and you, great children that you are, require so much feeding. In the morning I shall turn you out to hunt. The snow shall have stopped by then, and you may follow the deer by their fresh tracks."

Madeleine nodded severely at the sailors as she thus made known to them her mind.

The crew were still over supper, and Silas was telling one of his sea stories to ears which had already heard it a score of times, but listened patiently because it was the master speaking, when a deep sound broke among the hills and rolled onward through the snow, making the rough coast throb.

The skipper's mouth was open to laugh at his own excellent wit, but that sound brought his lips together, as it caused all his listeners to start for the door. The same cry was upon every tongue, as their hands dragged away the sail which stretched across the entrance :

"A gun !"

They poured into the terrible whiteness, huddling as close as sheep. Nothing was visible, except the

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steady masses shed from the clouds like wool. Not a sound, nor any sign of life. They waited, straining their eyes out to sea, but the gun did not roar again.

"Cast your eyes over to the west," called a voice, and the master found Sir Thomas at his side.

A glow in that direction filled the sky, making the surroundings weird, and from time to time a red tongue of fire leapt up.

"'Tis a French ship bringing provisions," said the knight, pointing into the unfathomable mass. "She has signalled, and yonder fire burns to guide her in."

"Wreck her!" cried a Cornishman. "Let us build another fire on the cliff to the east. With fortune, she shall steer for our beacon instead of the . . ."

"We should but make ourselves known," growled Upcliff.

A terrified shout broke upon his speech, and one of the men jumped against the huddled party, shrieking in fear.

"What ails you, Jacob Sadgrove?" cried the skipper.

"God save me! A foul spirit close at my side. She grinned out of the snow and floated away, her feet never touching ground. A warning—death warning, and I a miserable sinner."

The man grovelled upon his knees up to his waist in snow, flapping his hands and groaning.

"Speak up, man!" said Sir Thomas. "What is that you saw?"

"He has seen a wyvern," spoke the master contemptuously. "Was always a man to see more than other folk."

"Stood at my side and grinned in a fearsome

manner," whined the sailor. "The nose of her was slit like man yonder, and the ears of her were like a dog's, and she breathed fire out of her mouth."

"Stay!" cried Hough, stepping out. "Say you that her face was marked like mine?"

"The same," panted the man. "But dead and cold, and her eyes like fish——"

The Puritan drowned his wailings by a bitter cry.

"Forgive me, friends," he cried. "The Lord delivered me that woman to slay, and I, weak vessel that I am, drew back, and now am punished, and in my punishment you must share. We are discovered."

"The name of that woman?" demanded Sir Thomas.

"The sister of your wife."

"I knew it," groaned the knight. "The agent of my son's death. Which way went she?" he cried at the terrified sailor.

"She flew there—there," stuttered the man.

"Follow the tracks!"

"Nay, there are none. The snow already covers them."

"Her feet ne'er touched the snow," wailed the man. "Her feet were hot from the everlasting fire."

"Peace, fool," said Upcliff. He turned to Hough. "Are our lives in danger?"

"Never in greater. The woman is an Indian spy, who is now on her way to the settlement, where rules a hot-headed priest who has sworn to kill every Englishman in the land. They will be on us ere morning."

"There is only one way," said the master. "We

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must break the ice, release our barque, and put out. The sea is calm."

"She will not float."

"She shall float."

Upcliff gave his orders coolly, and the sailors hastened to obey through the muffling mists. The greater number attacked the ice with axe and saw, while the minority dismantled the shelter and reconveyed its contents to the ghostly ship. Every man worked his hardest, longing for the sea. The blow of axes and the snarl of a long saw sounded along the hidden coast.

Madeleine came down, all white with snow like a bride, and cheered them on, and presently brought each man a bowl of soup to renew his strength. A narrow lane opened through the ice, an ink-black passage in the colourless plain, but beyond stretched a long white field before the jagged edge where the snow wave curled in a monstrous lip.

The brigantine righted herself with a flutter and a plunge, casting the snow from her yards, and the grinding of her keel made joyful music. The toilers, sweating as though they had been reaping corn in summer, laboured to open the path to the stagnant sea.

"The rent in her hold is plugged by solid ice," called the skipper. "She shall carry that cargo bravely through this calm."

The big feathers of snow became spots of down, which lessened to the degree of frost points before morning. The country began to unroll, all padded with its monstrous coverlet; the trees masqueraded as wool-stuffed Falstaffs; the cliffs seemed to have

increased in the night ; the heavens were nearer the earth. The coast appalled in its cold virginity.

"One more hour, and then for the sea," sang Upcliff. "Is everything aboard?"

"All but the stove, captain. We wait for it to cool."

"Bring it out into the snow."

As Upcliff gave the order, a man crossed the brow of a western hill and floundered knee-deep towards the bay. It was Hough, and he shouted as he ran :

"The French are coming out !"

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE FALL OF THE SNOW.

BECAUSE the Father of Waters was frozen over and its track buried in snow, despatches from Quebec could only be conveyed by the hand of overland couriers. Winter had set in early that year, and with more than usual severity; and this was probably the reason why no messenger had lately arrived from the heights to inform the governor of Acadie as to what had taken place in and around the modest capital of New France.

The priest was not concerned by this silence. He had indeed lost much of his interest in the doings of the New World, since D'Archand had informed him of his popularity at home. He felt that he had made his advancement sure. During the weeks which followed autumn, when the maples were resigning their gorgeous vestments of red and gold, he had occupied himself in setting the affairs of his charge in order, looking to shortly receive a command to proceed to Rome, there to receive the reward of his stewardship. Onawa had passed out of his memory, and with her the brave young boy whom he had smitten in the forest by Couchicing. He sent no expedition out to search the land. He had done sufficient for glory. He was not the man to waste his energies upon works of supererogation. No slip could lose him that spiritual principality towards which he had pressed by word and act since the day of his ordination. As he

strode through the snow the settlement seemed to shrink from him, and the trees to bow, as though foreseeing the power which was about to pass into his hands.

La Salle reached his chapel, recited vespers in the arrogant voice which made him feared, and returned to his quarters. A spirit of restlessness was over him, and when he could resist no longer he rose, and, taking his sword, lunged repeatedly at a knot in the wall, striking it full until his body began to sweat.

"No falling off," he muttered, as he examined the pricks in the wood. "No sign of weakness yet." He lowered the sword, and mechanically wiped the point in the tail of his skirt, then passed his firm hand caressingly down the blade, murmuring, with a self-conscious smile: "I have finished my fighting. Henceforth my wrist must stiffen and my arm rust, while the power which has controlled the sword shall pass into the use of tongue and pen."

A knock fell upon the door, and in response to his reply a personal attendant entered, and with a low reverence announced:

"A messenger to speak with you, Excellency."

At the governor's word a man was ushered in, clad in furs, his beard heavy with icicles, a pair of long snow-shoes slung upon his back. He made a profound genuflection and stood with bent head awaiting permission to speak.

"Come you from the upper fortress?" asked La Salle.

"Yes, Excellency, with despatches for France and a letter for your Holiness."

La Salle put out his hand for the communication,

broke the thread, unfolded the sheet, and, holding it in the lamplight, bent over to read.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, his eyes lifting. "Laroche. What means this signature?"

"The noble commandant Roussillac has been stricken with sickness," hesitated the messenger.

"What ails him?" asked the priest.

The man faltered, but finally gained courage to reply: "It is said, Excellency, that the noble commandant acts strangely, as a man possessed by some unholy influence."

La Salle brought the letter again to his eyes, and hurriedly scanned the ill-written lines.

"It is explained here," he said indifferently. "La tête lui a tourné. Was never an able man," he muttered to himself. "Was ambitious, and thought himself strong enough to stand alone. 'Tis but justice." He looked across coldly, and sharply ordered the messenger to withdraw.

The emissary retired, bowing as he backed out, while La Salle ran his eyes over the remainder of the letter, muttering his comments aloud.

"Gaudriole hanged for murdering a soldier. So, so! Was but a brute. The little Frenchwoman dead of a fit, and her daughter escaped. A weeding-out, in faith. The traitorous Dutch gone beyond capture. The English spy also escaped. The men sent after him returned afoot, and swore that they had been set upon by demons among a range of white mountains. Would have hanged the fools. The Iroquois tribes gone into winter hunting-grounds. The country altogether clear. The Algonquins still friendly. This colony is now settled to France beyond question."

La Salle dropped the letter, and fell into musings. Once he put his hand to his brow, as though he could already feel a mitre pressing there; he fingered his ring, and moved his foot, to frown when his eyes sighted a rough boot instead of the scarlet shoe of his dreams. Then he was awakened by a noisy rattling and a shock.

The crucifix which had hung upon the log wall—more as a sign of profession, as the gauntlet outside the glove-maker's shop, than as a symbol he revered—lay broken upon the floor.

The priest rose, muttering a frightened imprecation, and as he nervously gathered up the shattered symbol his ears became opened to a hurrying of feet over the fresh snow. All the soldiers and settlers appeared to be rushing past afoot, shaking the ground and the walls of his house. It was doubtless this disturbance which had detached the crucifix from its nail. La Salle pulled a beaver cap over his forehead and made for the outer door, and there encountered a messenger who came to inform him that a ship's gun had been heard at sea.

"Bid them fire the beacon," said La Salle.

"It has been done, Excellency. There is not a breath over the water. But the snow pours down."

The priest's official bodyguard awaited him; and when he appeared every man saluted and fell into place, and so accompanied him to the cliff, where a huge fire was making the sky scarlet. This fire was a centre towards which all the settlers were hastening like flies towards a lantern. The coming of a ship from the Old World, with supplies, fresh faces, and

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news of friends, was a red-letter day in the monotonous calendar of their lives. The white figures hurried through the night like an inferno of chattering ghosts.

"She shall not be in till morning light," quoth a wiseacre. "There are rocks, see you, in the gulf, and her master shall run no risk after escaping the perils of the ocean."

"Will wager to-day's haul of fish that she lies up here before three hours are gone," cried another.

"And I my fishing-net that we shall not see her before day," retorted the confident first speaker.

"That net is mine. Didst not hear the gun?"

"Sounds carry far through the winter air."

"The snow muffles. She is scarce a mile out."

"Ah, that is indeed a fire! The light of it shall reach far out at sea."

The excitable folk laughed loudly whenever a fresh load of wood was flung upon the flames, and carried away by their feelings danced an ambulatory ballet in the red mist, a dance, like the Prosperity of the Arms of France to be given before Richelieu a few months later, not altogether without political significance. These settlers danced to the tune of their song; and their songs were Success to the Ships of France and Destruction to the English. While these revels lasted no one observed a soldier hurrying up behind, with a woman at his side. The woman was Onawa, breathing quickly as though she had been running at the top of her speed.

"Yonder stands his Holiness," said the man, stopping to point out La Salle surrounded by his little band of attendants.

Onawa abandoned her guide and rushed out, maddened and witless with her foolish passion, until she reached the side of the man she loved and was warmed by his dark eyes, which yet flashed angrily upon her, as he turned to shake off the parasite, ejaculating :

"Whom have we here?"

"It is I," she cried wildly in French, having at length acquired some little knowledge of that language. "Let me speak." More she would have said, but her store of the language failed in the time of need.

"Uncover her face," ordered La Salle. "Take her into the firelight that we may see with whom we have to deal."

"Let me speak to you here," prayed the girl, drawing back into the snow-lit gloom; but she was seized and dragged upward close to the dancing ring, and rough hands drew the covering from her face.

"*Tête de mort!*" exclaimed La Salle, and started back when he recognised the face that had once been handsome set towards him in the wild firelight, fearfully branded, the nostrils slit, the ears cropped, a letter seared upon each cheek. "Cover that horror, and drive her out lest she bewitch us."

"Hear me," the unhappy girl moaned, holding out her hands in an agony of supplication. "Yonder your enemy cover the shore. Many men and a ship held in the ice." She panted forth the syllables in the best French she could muster, throwing out her hands along the eastern shore.

La Salle's expression altered as he turned to his subordinates with the old fighting passion in his eye and heart.

"My men," he said, "this woman is but an Indian, but she is trustworthy, I know. An English vessel has been cast ashore, and the sailors seek to make shelter. What say you? Shall we warm our blood and relieve this tedious time of waiting by venturing out to exterminate the vermin?"

"Should we not first send out a spy?" suggested an old officer.

"It is well thought on. Choose you a man, and bid him take this woman for a guide. Let him stab her if she prove false. Do you gather together our fighters," went on the priest, turning to another, "and bid them make ready to sally out immediately."

"Shall you venture yourself, Excellency?"

"Shall I not!" cried La Salle, his hot blood afire for one more fight and one more triumph. "I fear we shall find but poor sport, but such as it is I shall take my share. Break up yonder circle of madmen, and order them to make ready. Hasten, so that we may have our hunt, and be ready to receive the ship when she sails out of the fog."

"I go not," cried Onawa, furiously resisting the soldiers who would have forced her away. She broke from them, ran to La Salle, and fell upon her knees, panting: "I go with you, that I may fight with you, and die for you."

"The woman has yet to learn a soldier's discipline," said La Salle coldly. "Secure a rope round her, and if she prove obstinate let her feel the end of it."

Onawa flung herself forward to grasp his feet, but two soldiers stepped out and dragged her away.

"Now, my brave comrades! To arms!" shouted the fighting priest.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ARMS AND THE MAN.

SILAS UPCLIFF groaned bitterly when he heard the Puritan's shout. Being a brave man, his spirit inclined towards lending aid to his compatriots, but being honest also, his sense of duty impelled him to observe the oath which he had made to his niggardly owner. While he was thus halting between two opinions, the three venturers left him upon the shore, the blood tingling in their veins at the prospect of a glorious death.

Penfold led the way and took command, carrying his burden of years as lightly as any man upon that coast. Striking upward from the bay, where the sailors were fighting the ice, he brought his companions to a height of three hundred feet above the sea, where the cliffs were divided by a narrow defile down which in summer coursed a stream.

"I have kept this place in mind," said the old man, when they halted at the extremity of the pass. "Here we shall make our stand."

So contracted was the way that the snow, massed heavily upon the sides, in places nearly touched. Some pines clung to the rock, hanging over the defile, straining at their rope-like roots. At these the old yeoman pointed with the order :

"Fell me two trees so that they shall fall along the pass."

The others scrambled up the cliff and cut at the snaky roots, while Penfold occupied himself below in treading the snow into a firm bed. Soon the tough pines began to crack and sway. First one crashed down, then another, and after that Upcliff came running, short of breath, into the defile, having at length made up his mind that Master Grignion must lose his ship.

"The enemy show black against the snow yonder, a hundred men if there be one," he shouted. "Tell me now, how shall I dispose my men?"

"Return to your ship, Master Skipper, and cut her free with what speed you may," replied Penfold gruffly. "We stand here to hold back the enemy so long as life remains."

"Mayhap they shall not come this way?" suggested Upcliff.

"If they do not, then are ye doubly safe. Before they can pass round you shall be away, for I know of no easy path up yonder wall, and on the south the sea guards us. See you not that they must here advance singly, and that one good fighter may hold them all at bay?"

"They have guns," said Upcliff, cocking his ear to listen to the axes ringing keenly in the bay.

"They shall not use them. The snow must drench their priming."

The skipper made a step back, but halted again.

"I cannot desert you, comrades," he said hoarsely.

"My owner is also an Englishman, an alderman of London town, and, close-minded though he be, I wot he would lose his venture and his ship rather than see England shamed. Bid me call my men to the far

end of this pass, and there let us stand together until the end."

"See you not that this is our affair?" replied Penfold. "We are fighting for our own hands, having blood of comrades to avenge. Go, for you do but waste your time and ours."

"Away," added Hough, pushing the skipper gently back. "The Lord being on our side, how should we be afraid? They come about us like bees, and are extinct even as the fire among the thorns, for in the name of the Lord shall we destroy them. Go, good master, and while we smite these worshippers of idols do you release your ship."

Thus compelled to observe his oath, Upcliff gave way, though with great unwillingness, and ran to the end of the pass, where his eyes were gladdened by the sight of the *Dartmouth* riding in the black channel, dressed out in all her canvas. His sailor's heart warmed at the spectacle, but sank again when he contemplated the wide white field which still spread between the deep sea and his ship. He staggered down, blowing like a whale, and snatching an axe from the tired hands of one of his sailors wielded it furiously.

The men in the pass twisted the pine-boughs and snagged the trunks to form a rough chevaux-de-frise. Before an hour had passed they heard footfalls crushing the snow, and then Penfold smiled and rose to his feet. The old man had been resting beneath a tree.

"Comrades," he said, "I lead by the privilege of age. Not more than one can make a stand in this narrow pass. Do you ascend the cliff, one on either side and as the enemy attempt to climb the barrier

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cast snow into their faces. The rest you shall leave to me."

"Out on you, old Simon," said Hough strongly. "I am younger than you by many years, and thus shall last the longer."

"You may fill this place after me," said Penfold. "But while I live I rule."

Hough was not satisfied, and the argument was only brought to an end by the sight of a cap lifting above the ridge.

"To your places," whispered Penfold, stepping quickly to the barrier.

The knight was already upon the cliff, sheltering his spare body behind a pine. He awaited the one man who, he felt assured, would not lose the opportunity of a fight, and he did not desire to risk his life until he and that man could meet.

"Captain!" called a French voice startingly, "a barrier is thrown across the way."

"Over it," ordered the officer.

The man jumped upon the fallen trunk and threw up his hands to grasp the higher branches; but his fingers merely clutched the air, he gave a groan, and fell back, pierced through the heart by Penfold's sword, which had darted from the interlacing branches. A shout went up from the pass, which was now a struggling mass of soldiers.

"Information ever costs a man," said the officer coolly. "Storm the barrier."

Two soldiers rushed out and flung themselves upon the locked trees, jostling each other in the constricted space. A lump of snow hit the foremost between the eyes, he gasped, and would have turned, but a sword-

thrust sent him to his doom, and his comrade, blinded in the self-same manner, shared his fate.

"There are men in hiding yonder," rang a voice. "The villains shelter behind the trees."

"Find me a way round," roared an angry voice, and La Salle pushed along the pass. "Are we to be held here by one man behind a fallen tree?"

"There is no way up, Excellency," said an officer, gazing up the face of the rock. "The heretics have well chosen their place."

"Send men round," shouted the priest.

A detachment was sent instantly to find a way over the cliff, while woodmen with axes went out and laid furiously upon the pines. Penfold disabled the first, but another advanced, and after him another, each unwilling to obey, but unable to hang back.

Three dead bodies were dragged out, and La Salle tried the expedient of sending his men in rapid succession against the barrier. The wet snow dashed their faces, one by one they dropped before that s. . . g sword, man after man fell back, but another always stood ready to rush into the gap, to make the attempt, and give way to someone more confident than he. Penfold's dogged old tongue counted off the strokes to the ringing of the ice-axes from the bay. The soldier-settlers came faster, each man more fierce than the last, because their blood was heated by the shame of this defeat. The old man's misty breath came streaming between the branches where his untiring sword flickered in and out.

Two at a time came the Frenchmen, until at length, profiting by a mis-stroke, a couple gained the summit of the barrier. The first to jump down fell

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a prey to the stout yeoman, but the second reached the ground unharmed. A shout of triumph went up, and the soldiers swarmed the obstacle.

"Excellency, the Indian woman has shown us a way over the cliff," exclaimed a voice beside La Salle. "That way, says she, we shall encounter no opposition."

"I will myself make the trial," La Salle answered. "Do you in the meantime win this pass."

"She says also that we must hasten, because these men are holding the pass while their comrades free the ship from the ice."

Penfold fought on, grim to the end, but his sword had lost its deadliness and his arm was growing numb. His comrades aided him as best they could, but they too were acting upon the defensive, because some of the more daring soldiers had scaled the slippery sides of the pass in a futile endeavour to drag them down. The old man groaned and tottered as the light failed gradually from his eyes.

"Let it be said of me," he gasped, "that I gave them half an hour."

Voices roared in his ears, like the waves of a stormy sea about to close over his head.

"Strike! He is spent. Strike him down."

There followed an onward rush. Over the old man's failing body sped the bitterness of death.

He felt a sword in his side, another in his shoulder, and at the pain he revived like an old lion, and roared and plunged forward, feeling his way with his point, until he found his striker's heart, and then he shouted with all the strength that was left:

"Stand up in my stead, comrade! I have made a

good fight, and accounted for the best. They shall run before us yet. To me, comrade! Ha! St. Edward and St. George!"

With that last shout he fell, deep into the red snow, his old body spouting blood, and so died like a valiant man of Berks, with his sword fast held, and his grey head set towards the foe.

Hough hurled back a soldier, who had clambered up the cliff to dislodge him, and would have flung himself down to stop the way, when on a sudden a tall figure slid down the side opposite him, and stood immediately to defy the body of men sweeping through like an inundating wave, wielding his sword with calm, nervous strength, his keen eyes starting from a thin, brown face.

Then Hough's courage gave way, and sinking to his knees, while the enemy rushed through, he cried aloud. Death had no terror for him; but the spectacle of that cold man, whom for an instant he had seen, fighting in the raw light of the dawn, then thrown down and trodden under foot, made him shiver to the heart.

"The Lord encompasses us with the spirits of our friends," he cried, knowing that it was Jesse Woodfield who already lay hacked and bruised and buried in the snow of the defile.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

THE Acadians swept towards the bay, but their governor was not with them. La Salle had gone alone over the cliffs, along the way which Onawa had revealed, and he went not unseen. The Kentishman followed, searching out each footprint in the snow. Once again the priest was destined to take up the sword, before assuming the mantle of spiritual power. As he passed among the pines the loneliness of the place began to make him fear, and when he stopped with a curse, because he knew not which way to turn, he seemed to behold the sword of his dream flashing like lightning between the mitre and himself. And while halting he heard perplexing shouts, lessening, receding, and growing faint, as his men rushed down upon their foes.

Hearing those shouts Upcliff looked up from the field of ice, and his heart for an instant ceased when he saw that the enemy had gained the pass.

"Now, men of Somerset," he shouted, "let our bird fly right soon, or we shall never sight England again."

"We can do no more than our best, captain," growled the sailor Jacob Sadgrove. "My arms are near dead with work."

"Out!" cried Madeleine, sweeping forward. "Out, and make room for a woman."

She caught up the axe which the grumbler had dropped, and, lifting her brave arms, attacked the barrier of ice with never a thought of fear, until the sailor returned glumly to his work for shame.

"Only a few more yards," the deceiving girl cried, throwing back her flushed face. "Look not behind. To regard work closely is to fear it. Attack boldly, and it is done. See how the ship struggles to be free! Soon we shall fly through the open water, with the wind in our sails. Then shall you rest, and it shall delight you to remember the work."

So she called, laughing and singing at intervals, and running here and there to encourage the toilers, a faithful angel of hope, while the axes rang more strongly and the men cast side-glances towards the foe and swore breathlessly at their impotence.

"Get you aboard, lass," said Upcliff, loosening his cutlass. "Here is work for men. My lads, we shall make a good fight for country and faith, and die, if God will, like true men facing odds. Now we are taken on both sides."

He pointed to the north-west. Out of the gloom of dawn and the fog-wreaths, which ever haunt the Nova Scotian banks, sailed a full-rigged man-of-war beating against the breeze. It was the provision ship making for the settlement now that the helmsman could see to steer between the rocks.

"Nothing but a miracle can serve," quoth the skipper. "And the age of miracles is past."

"Have but faith, and the miracle shall yet be wrought," cried Madeleine, her magnificent confidence strong within her, even in that hour when a

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less bold spirit would have seen the doors of a heretic's prison reopening. "God shall yet make a way for us to escape. I know we are not doomed. Help me, captain, and you sailors, with your faith. We are never to be taken. We are to escape from our enemies, and God shall give to us the victory."

Upcliff smiled sadly as he gazed at the radiant face of the prophetess, shaking his grizzled head as he muttered:

"May the good Lord bless you, girl. You send us forth strong to fight."

Then again he faced his men and formed them in line; and when they stood ready to receive the enemy, every man his cutlass in hand, the master cried out strongly:

"Let no man surrender. For such the French have a gallows. Lads, we shall, by God's grace, leave a deep mark on yonder little army before the ship comes nigh. See you how slowly she labours down? She can scarce make headway against the tide, and the breeze freshens every minute. Now for a bold stand, a stern struggle, and may the Lord have mercy on us all."

Stout Somerset throats answered him with a cheer. They had exercised their privilege of grumbling over the uncongenial work of cutting a way for their ship through the ice-field while their compatriots fought upon the cliffs; but not a man drew back from the prospect of that hopeless battle.

The Acadians struggled down the long hill, floundering in the soft snow, and, halting upon the flat, drew up in the form of a crescent. There were signs of unwillingness among the settlers, due in part to the

reputation gained in those days by Englishmen of never shrinking from a struggle to the death. They were also perturbed by the absence of La Salle, whom they had not seen since Woodfield had been overwhelmed and left for dead in the defile.

While the French thus hesitated, Upcliff and his impetuous men were for advancing to the attack; but Madeleine came before them, and in a strained voice, altogether unlike her usual tones, implored the skipper not to move towards the shore.

"Do not leave the ice," she cried. "I charge you go not beyond the ice."

"The maid has surely lost her wits," muttered Upcliff.

"See the eyes of her!" whispered Jacob Sadgrove to his nearest companion. "Have seen a horse look so, when he knows of somewhat coming, and would speak of it if he might."

A roar broke the morning fog. The ship had fired to encourage her allies. The ball splashed into the black water far from the gallant *Dartmouth*, which quivered and shook her sails in furious helplessness.

"Swear to me that you will not leave the ice-field," cried Madeleine.

"Ay, if you wish it," said Upcliff; adding bluntly: "May die as well here as yonder. Stand together, lads. They come!"

"Oh, why so long?" prayed Madeleine, bending upon the snow. "It is time for the miracle. I know we are to be saved, but it is terrible to wait. I know that not a hair upon the head of any of these men shall be harmed; but they know it not, and they prepare

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for death because they cannot see. Oh, God, send us now the miracle ! ”

“Stand firm ! ” shouted Upcliff. “Let them make the charge, and we shall smite them as they stumble in the snow.”

He spoke, and straightway a mighty report rang along the shore. The ice on which the men planted their resolute feet quivered and heaved. The attackers halted and drew back ; the attacked stared at one another in superstitious wonderment. No smoke drifted behind. The guns upon the ship had not spoken. But the echoes of that dry, sharp sound still crashed among the cliffs.

Madeleine rose, and sent her rapturous voice singing into the ears of all : “The miracle ! The miracle ! ”

Already a channel of black water frothed and bubbled between the English sailors and the French settlers, a channel which widened each moment, as the ice-floe which the change of temperature had parted so suddenly from the shore drifted seawards, drawn out by the strong gulf current, bearing the men snatch^{ed} from death, the little ice-locked ship, and the gun^s who had trusted so firmly and so well.

They flocked round her, the rough sailors, crying like children, and knelt to kiss her hands.

“To work ! ” she cried, pointing to the silver strip which held the floe united.

But before the men could again use their axes the strain told. The ice cracked again and the field was divided into two parts. There was a momentary danger lest the brigantine should be crushed between the floes, but this peril was averted by the regularity of the current. The men swung themselves aboard,

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lifting Madeleine up the ladder of ropes and so upon deck. The enemy already had become grotesque black spots upon the shore.

"Clear the decks for battle!" the captain thundered as the little ship ran free of the ice.

The Frenchman had altered her course, and was bearing down upon the *Dartmouth*, roaring with all her guns.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE THIRST.

ONAWA, daughter of Shuswap, vagrant and traitress, she who had brought disaster upon her own people, continued to reap the reward of all her constancy to the enemy of her race. Famished and parched, she sank into a bed of snow, and rested her wildly throbbing head against a frosted tree. She had not eaten for many hours, her shelter was more than a league away, and her strength was gone. Her reward also was a maddening thirst.

After tracking down the Englishmen, watching them in the fall of the snow, enduring every privation until she had learnt their strength, she had gone at full speed to the settlement, madly hoping even then that La Salle might look on her with favour, despite her branded cheeks and mutilated face. His reward was to give her over to the soldiers, who had mocked her because she was of the hated race, a savage in their eyes, and had bound her with a rope and scourged her with the end of it, and had even struck her with their fists when she halted from exhaustion, and would have stabbed her to death had she refused to obey. Thus she received her full reward. And now she could do no more.

Neuralgic pains coursed through her head, until the weight of her hair became a torment. Feverishly

she sucked a handful of snow, but the awful thirst remained unquenched. The sounds of the chase entered her ears dimly from that half-lit region ahead, until drowsiness passed into her body, and her head dropped, and her eyes closed, and the sleep which moves imperceptibly into death came upon her. Her passionate heart lowered its beat, her pulses throbbed more sluggishly, as she drew close to the threshold which separates life and its object from the world of dreams. Her body collapsed, her head slid down; the soft snow sucked her in like quicksand.

A figure passed among the slim terebinth columns. Though the sleeper had brought down her father into dishonour, had betrayed her tribe, and called the shadow of death across the home of her kindred, her sister had not forgotten her. The figure approached, bent over the huddled shape, and shook it roughly back to life.

"Tuschota!" muttered the girl, as her eyes opened upon the immobile brown face.

"Rise," said the woman. "Lean on me, and I will take you to my hut."

"Leave me here," moaned Onawa. "I would lie until the great sleep comes."

"I am your sister. I may not leave you thus to die. Yonder food awaits you, and drink, and the warmth of burning logs."

She assisted Onawa to rise. The girl staggered and clung with dead hands. Together they passed down the slope, and so came to the cabin cunningly hidden amid snowy bush. A fire burnt redly, and hard by stood a stone vessel filled with rice-water. Towards this Onawa reached her hands, with the cry:

"I am tortured with thirst."

Without a word her sister gave her drink, and watched her while she gulped at the tepid liquor. Suddenly she put out her hand, and grasped the vessel, saying :

"See! I have meat ready for you."

Onawa partook of the food like a famished beast, and as strength returned the former love of life awoke, and she longed to go forth to renew the hopeless quest; but she felt her sister's eyes reading her thoughts, and presently she heard that sister's voice :

"It is good to live, Onawa."

She made no reply, but leaned forward, thrusting her hands against the scarlet wood.

"Even when son and husband are taken away, and the light fails, and all the ground is dark, it is still good to live," went on the voice. "Why the good God gives this love of life we may not know."

"Give me more drink," the girl panted.

"Our father shall soon pass into the spirit land," went on the stern woman, unheeding her request. "He is old, but 'tis not age that saps his strength. Honour has departed from him. He has lost the headship, and another fills his office."

Onawa stared sullenly into the leaping heart of the fire.

"As this life continues we find trouble. You have lost beauty, and I a son. We shall not regain that which we have lost. Sisters in blood we are, and sisters in unhappiness also."

"I have brought sorrow into your life," muttered Onawa, less in penitence than defiance.

"And shall do so again. This night you have

brought the enemy of my people out from Acadie. There was a time when you betrayed my son into the hands of him who now spurns you from his side. That which is done cannot be undone, and God shall punish."

"Why, then, have you brought me here?" cried Onawa fiercely. "Why did you not leave me to perish, that you might be rid of me for ever?"

"Remember you not the words that I spoke to you in the grove? I bade you have in mind that in the time when you should hunger and thirst you might turn to me. I have not forgotten, though you turned against me when your heart followed its own longing."

"I grieved for your Richard."

"So the hunter grieves when he by mischance has slain the bear cub which has strayed. And so he avoids the mother if he loves his life."

At that moment there rang in her steady voice a threat. Onawa looked up and met a suffering brown face and large quiet eyes. There was no menace there, nothing but longing for the dead and charity for the living.

She pressed a hand upon her burning throat. "Give me drink," she gasped.

Her sister poured some of the rice-water into a smaller vessel. This she stirred gently with a stick, watching the ruined face of Onawa with the same patient eyes. Outside the hut a flight of snow birds whirled from side to side.

"When you have drunk you shall go forth," said Mary Iden deliberately. "You shall seek to aid my enemy when he strives to strike down my husband."

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Onawa gave a cry. In wondering over her sister's forgiveness she had forgotten La Salle.

"They may already have met," she muttered.

A stern smile crossed her sister's face.

"Can you not hear?" she whispered. "Yet you say you love the white priest. I have heard this long while the noise of sword striking sword. I listen without fear, knowing that no man can conquer my husband when no treachery hangs behind. Can you not hear the sounds of the fight?"

"My ears burn," cried Onawa. "I hear only the cold wind passing among the pines."

"They fight!" exclaimed her sister triumphantly. "My Richard shall rest to-day."

"The water," gasped Onawa for the third time. "My throat is on fire."

"Drink and go forth."

Grasping the vessel in both hands, Onawa drained it to the dregs. Then, as her arms fell, and the taste in her mouth became exceeding bitter, and a strange exaltation visited her brain, and her body began to burn, and numbness came into her feet, she bent with one terrible groan, to hide her fear and her shame, and—if it were possible—her awful knowledge of the wolfsbane poisoning that draught, from the calm black eyes which stared at her across the fire.

"Aid whom you will," said the steady voice, which was scarce audible above the furious beatings of the listener's heart. "The day breaks."

A lifeless winter sun was struggling into the hut.

The pride of her race remained with Onawa to the end. She would not show fear, nor useless rage, in the presence of her sister. She would not confess

what she knew, nor acknowledge that she had met with the punishment which she deserved and the laws of their race demanded. Passing into a sad beam of light, she drew herself erect and panted :

"I shall go forth."

"Go, sister," said the poisoner. "I too go forth, but we shall not walk together. For you " west and the forest, for me the south and the sea."

"I go among the pines."

"Farewell, sister."

"Farewell."

Erect and proud, Onawa passed out with her awful sorrow, through the opening morning, and so among the trees, still dignified and unbending because she knew those calm black eyes followed all her movements. On she went into the increasing gloom, until the snow carpet appeared to grow hot, and opalescent colours fringed the trees, and sounds of sleepy music hummed around her head. The red and green lights flashed up and down ; solitude closed behind her ; the pine-barrens were on fire. The world was gone.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SWORDCRAFT.

THE path taken by La Salle ascended and brought him finally to the crest of a hill. Here a wood of storm-beaten pines stood motionless in the white calm of the long winter sleep. Between the dimly lighted trees spread a narrow scar of black earth, which had been protected from snow by the funereal boughs above. The spot was as silent and as sad as a burying-place. It seemed to the priest that the balsamic pines might have been planted to neutralise any noxious odours emanating from the ground. He shivered at the thought, turned to retrace his steps and find an outlet which might lead him to the shore ; but straightway a restraint fell upon his feet, and a thrill raced through his body, when he perceived that the place whereon he walked was haunted ground.

Before him stood a figure, white-faced and worn, clad in ragged garments, a man to all outward seeming no more sentient than the pines, for he moved not at all, nor did he speak, nor make a sign. As though rooted and frozen, he stood across the way, showing life and feeling only in his eyes.

"By all the saints !" the priest muttered. "'Tis but a half-starved Englishman."

Then he shouted his ready challenge to the silent man, who passed immediately with swift movements

to the strip of bare ground, and, halting within touch of his enemy, addressed him sternly in the Gallic tongue :

"That you may learn, Sir Priest, with whom you have to deal, know that before you stands Sir Thomas Iden, a squire of England and a knight of Kent, a man moreover who has sworn to fight you fairly to the death. Remember you that night on which you put to death a boy in the forest beside Couchicing? That boy was my son, my only child. Sir Priest, you and I have crossed swords before this day. I was then a better man than now ; but, with the help of my God and the spirit of my child, I shall lay out your body in this lonely spot for the winds to howl upon, and leave your eyes open for the crows to peck at. I pray you answer only with your sword."

Hot words came to La Salle's tongue, but he did not utter them. He found himself daunted by the horror of the place and the unyielding attitude of the knight. As he brought up his renowned right arm, it shivered and the hand was cold. But so soon as their blades met, his fighting spirit arose and conquered the superstitious fear, and a fierce light shone again in his eyes, and the knowledge was borne back upon him that he was in truth the finest swordsman in the New World, and with that he shouted out, "Have at you, heretic dog!" and attacked with all his might.

Not a bird moved through the air, not an insect lived upon that hill top, not an animal passed that way. The two men had the gloomy wood to themselves. Not even a breath of wind passed to wave the pines, or scatter into motion last autumn's

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rusted leaves, which spotted with red the sable rent in the great white sheet which Nature had drawn across the ground. The rhythm of the swords rang monotonously, as the two weird figures drifted to and fro, from side to side of the dusky bluff, struggling the one against the other, with life as the winner's prize. Before the abbé spread his splendid career of power as a prince of the Church. He had but to emerge triumphant from this last taking of the sword to assume the dignity of his new office and realise the ambition of his heart. While the avenger saw neither priest, nor governor, nor fencer of renown, but merely a fellow-being who had extinguished the light of his young son's life.

So the momentous minutes passed. When the sound of quick and furious breathing began to pulsate around the hill, Mary Iden ascended from the hollow, after playing her part in the avenging of her son's death, and watched with bosom heaving rapidly every movement of her husband, sure in her faith that he was the strongest man alive. Yet she aided him with her counsel; and when the passion of the fight had entered also into her she cast contempt and hatred upon La Salle, and mocked his skill, though he was on that day the finer swordsman of the pair.

"Wait not, husband," she cried warningly. "He is more spent than you."

Sir Thomas heard and rushed out. La Salle, standing sideways, parried the thrust with a slight motion of his iron wrist, and, rounding, took up the attack, which ended in a feint and a lunge over the heart. His sword glanced under the knight's arm and the point struck a fir and was almost held.

"Perdition!" he muttered. "I must use greater caution."

For a few seconds the blades were dazzling as they darted together with the malignity and swiftness of serpents; then La Salle feigned to stumble, lowering his point as though he had lost his grip, an old trick he had often employed successfully, and as the knight leaped forward to take his opening, the priest recovered and sent the blade into his opponent's side. Life had never appeared to him so good as at that moment, but before his laugh had died the Englishman leaned forward, grasping the sword and holding it firmly in his side, lunged out, and ran the priest through the chest, after La Salle had saved his life by throwing up his arm and deflecting the point from his heart.

They fell apart, gulping the keen air for a taste of new life. The watcher advanced, her brown face ghastly, but her husband put out his hand and motioned her back.

"Away, Mary. There is life in me yet."

Unwillingly she retired, and a flush of pride crossed her face when her husband staggered across the snow, his eyes still clear and fierce. La Salle, no whit less dauntless, came up also and stood swaying like one of the trees behind.

"You are brave, Englishman, and a worthy foe," he gasped. "We have shed each other's blood. Let us now cry hold and part."

"There can be no truce between you and me," came the deep reply. "This fight is to the death."

"Life has its pleasures," urged La Salle.

"Of such you deprived my son."

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"Your blood be upon your own head!"

Again their swords clashed. No signs of weakening yet upon either drawn face. The balance swayed neither to the one side nor to the other.

Again the watcher started out, appealing to her husband. It would be an easy matter to attack La Salle from the rear; to trip his foot with a stick; to blind him by a handful of snow. But the knight would not hear her; and even threatened when she made as though she would disobey.

The priest listened for the tramp of feet and the call of voices. He would then have called the meanest settler in Acadie his brother. Shoutings came to him from the bay, the roar of the ship's gun, and the splitting of the ice. He groaned and cursed the folly which had driven him into this snare.

Courage revived when he scored by a clever stroke; but again his triumph was short-lived. The knight answered by driving his point hard into the open side. Darkness dropped upon their eyes. They reeled like drunken men, fighting the air, feeling for each other, falling body to body, and pushing apart with a convulsive shudder.

"Where are you?" gasped the abbé.

"Here," moaned the Englishman, striking towards the voice.

"It is enough," said La Salle, the voice gurgling in his throat. "Flesh and blood can endure no more. Put up your sword."

"Only in your heart."

They held at each other with one hand while fighting with the other. A wound on one side was answered by a wound on the other. It appeared as

though neither had another drop of blood to shed, not a muscle left unspent, nor a breath to come. The chill of the winter was in the soul of each, and it was also the chill of death. They crawled at each other like torn beasts, upon hands and knees.

"You are spent," pulsed La Salle.

"My sword has gone through you twice."

"Husband, bid me strike him," implored the watcher. "He is scarce able to lift his arm."

"Back, woman," panted the dying man.

Once more they stood upon their feet, and again their points were raised, but now against bodies which had lost all consciousness, save the ruling passion of ambition in the one and vengeance in the other.

"Down!" snarled the abbé, knowing not it was the last word which his tongue should utter; and, closing with his enemy, threw his remaining life into one lunge.

The sword left his hand for ever. By a glimmer of light through the red darkness he saw the body of the knight stretched black along that ghastly carpet; he saw the woman running forth with a great cry to raise it by the shoulders. Then night fell upon the victor as he stumbled on among the trees, with a small sane voice of consciousness singing in his departing soul: "You have fought your last fight. You shall win the red hat yet."

So he was found by his defeated soldiers, feeling his way from pine to pine, leaving in his wake two dotted lines more ruby-red than the cardinal's soutane. They bound up his wounds as best they could, and, raising him upon their shoulders, bore the dead weight of unconscious matter into Acadie.

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At noon the ship came to the landing-stage. During the excitement which accompanied and followed her arrival even the governor became forgotten. A cadaverous priest was the first to step ashore, casting around him glances of intolerable pride. Others were quick to follow, and soon it became noised abroad that Roussillac was to be recalled and that Pope Urbano had need of La Salle the priest. Even such momentous matters were put aside by the settlers in their anxiety to hear tidings of home and friends.

In the meantime the pale-faced priest had set forth for the governor's abode, muttering imprecations upon the bitter country in which it had become his evil lot to settle.

"His Excellency?" he inquired shortly at the door; and the seneschal, awed by his morose manner, merely made a reverence and pointed as he said: "He lies within, Holiness."

More he would have said, but the nuncio passed on quickly and entered the room, holding forth a missive tied with scarlet thread calling in a jealous voice:

"Your Excellency! A letter from Rome. A call for your return."

La Salle was lying along the bed. The messenger came nearer.

"Awake, your Excellency! His Holiness Pope Urbano sends to you——"

There the strange priest stopped at beholding a broken crucifix beneath the sleeper's right hand; and a sneering smile curved his lips, and he shrugged his thin shoulders, as he callously observed:

"Methinks his Holiness has sent in vain."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SETTLEMENT.

IT has now been shown how the golden lilies prospered in the north, and how the red lion, who should in time tear those gay lilies down, was laughed at and despised. The paths of ambition, of treachery, of vengeance, have brought direct to the same terminus, where that "fell sergeant death" stood forth to cry "Halt" to soldier and to priest. The name of La Salle has ever been held in honour, but chiefly to memorise Robert the explorer, not the ambitious priest his uncle. The name of Iden is still revered by Kentish folk; but that respect is won, not by Sir Thomas, who—if the tradition in his family be true—married an Indian wife and flung away his life to avenge his son, but to Sir Alexander, who slew the rebel Cade in a Sussex orchard. The name of Onawa is held in memory by none, though for many generations the wood wherein she died of the poisoned draught administered by her sister was shunned by the Iroquois, because there sounded amid the pines at night the howling of a werewolf.

The old chronicles mention two Englishmen who escaped from the French, and Jesse Woodfield and Jeremiah Hough are the names recorded. When the Acadians swept down the defile to secure Upliff and his men, the Puritan was ignored, and the yeoman,

who had made so startling an appearance, was left for dead. So soon as they had gone Hough made for his companion, and discovered that he was indeed mangled and alive, though sorely wounded. Presently Woodfield revived, and when he was able to stand the Puritan led him away up the white hills to find a place of shelter. The hut in the pine-wood being too far away, they proceeded by slow stages towards the home of the night, knowing nothing of what had occurred and scarce guessing it when they gained the bush-filled hollow, which was stirred to its depths by the wailing of a death-song.

"A fitting welcome for broken-hearted men," said the Puritan. "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept. The children of Edom have smitten us full sore. Happy shall he be that rewardeth them as they have served us. Take courage, old lad. We are even now at home."

"Home without friends," broke from the pale lips of the man within his arms.

"Where the graves of comrades are, there is the brave man's home. In England we are gone out of mind, and broken like a potter's vessel. Here amid the snows old Simon and old George lie sleeping well."

The song stopped when they entered the hut and stood between the living and the dead. Immediately Woodfield sank down in unconsciousness, and after one glance upon the sad scene and a few bitter words, Hough knelt at his comrade's side and searched for his wounds.

"Let a woman perform a woman's work," said the pale watcher, rising from her husband's side.

"For him"—she inclined her head to the silent figure—"the light is gone. He sees no longer the sparkling air. His eyes shall not burn again. The great God knows how well he lived and how he died."

Seeing the question on the Puritan's lips, she went on:

"The hand that smote our son smote him. I saw the man go, and death with him like a cloud above his head. Give me the water that stands yonder that I may wash these wounds."

"Who brought him hither?" the Puritan asked.

"These arms carried him. While he lived he would have me bear no burden. The wood for the fire he took from me, saying, 'This is no woman's work. A woman shall smile for her husband, prepare him food, and keep a home for his return.' These arms carried my son to his grave. My husband was not there, or surely he would have said, 'This is no work for you.' These arms carried my husband from the place where he fell. His eyes looked up to mine, as though again he would say, 'This is no work for you.' Once more they shall carry him. Afterwards I will wait for the coming of the south wind, which carries the souls of the dead."

She applied her skill in healing to the restoration of the white man. She cleansed his wounds and cooled his fever, leaving him at length sleeping with a wan smile of triumph on his face. By then Hough also was asleep, his face terrible in its mutilation and sternness.

When he revived, Woodfield told his comrade how he had been captured by the Algonquins and how they had sought to put him to death.

"I awoke from unconsciousness," he said, "to find myself within a cave, attended by the maid who had loosed my body from the tree. An old man watched the entry and brought me food. These two had saved my life, the maid because she loved my white skin, the man because he was Christian and had lost a son who would have been of my age had he lived. I remained in that cave many days, gaining vigour, and on a certain evening, when left alone, ran out into the shadows and hid myself in the forest, covering my tracks as best I could.

"The maid pursued and besought me in her own manner to return. Many times I escaped from her. Often she brought me food, or I must have perished of hunger during my long wanderings through the forest. I would hear her calling after me in the still night. I would from some hill-top see her following my track, and when she found me she would hold me by the feet and strive to move my heart. But resisting the wiles of Satan, who would have me to forget my own country and my father's house, I ran from her again."

"We thought you dead these many months."

"It was the will of God that I should seek for you in vain," went on Woodfield. "Once I lay in a swamp to hide myself from a band of French explorers. Once I was attacked by six men. One I killed, and the remainder fled, frightened by lightning which struck down a tree between us. Another time I concealed myself in a hemlock while the soldiers made their camp beneath its branches. So I fought my way on towards the east with an Englishman's longing for the sea, and when winter drew on I made

me a shelter in the pine woods on the westward side of Acadie, and there mourned for you and for Simon Penfold as for comrades who had fallen in the battle."

"How came you so suddenly to our aid?"

"In the darkness of the falling snow I ventured to approach the settlement. Nay more, I entered at the open gate, careless of my life, and followed the soldiers out, my heart rejoicing when I learnt from their shouts that countrymen of mine were near at hand. I climbed among the cliffs, and, looking down, beheld old Simon fighting in the defile. I was descending to give him help when he fell."

"The Lord gives and the Lord has taken away," said the Puritan solemnly.

While the words were on his lips the wattle door was shaken and a soft voice called. Another moment a white figure entered with a rush of smoky air, and Madeleine stood before them, wrapped in a sail which she had assumed to render her progress across the snow invisible. She threw away the covering and laughed triumphantly.

"Say not that the ship is taken?" cried Hough. Then he muttered: "A man may tell nothing from the maid's manner. Sorrow or joy—'tis the same to her. She laughs through it all."

"The ship is safe," said Madeleine. "We were attacked by the man-of-war, but when we drew clear of the ice we soon left her lumbering astern, until she gave up the chase and sailed for shore. We have not lost a man."

"Then what do you here?"

"Think you that Silas Upcliff would desert friends?" cried Madeleine indignantly. "So soon as

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he knew himself to be safe, he changed his course and beat up the coast eastward until darkness fell. Then he dropped down, and now has sent a boat to bring you off. I have come for you, and must take no refusal, else I am sure they shall hang me upon my return. I would bear the message myself. The master at first crossed me, but, being a wise man, he gave way to a woman's whim. Come! The boat waits, and liberty lies beyond."

She moved across the éarth floor and grasped the Puritan's arm.

"What maid is this?" asked Woodfield, as he gazed at the vision of beauty; and when Hough had told him the good soldier's heart swelled, and he raised his stiff body that he might take her hand, while she smiled at him through a mist of pity.

"I want you, wounded man," she said. "There are none sick aboard, and I must have one to care for, or my hands will hang idle all the day. I have thrown in my lot with your people, because mine own have driven me forth. You shall call me sister if you will, and you shall be brother to me, because he who is to be my husband is your true comrade, and 'tis friendship that makes brotherhood rather than blood. Rise, brother, and lean on me."

"Girl," said Hough, with his stern smile, "this spell you cast over us is more potent than witchcraft."

"We come," cried Woodfield, drawing himself upright. "Say, comrade, let us flee to Virginia, and settle among our own, that we may hear the blessed English tongue again."

"We go," answered Hough gloomily. "Here is no English colony, but we seek one in the south."

"Go," said Mary Iden, now again Tuschota, daughter of Shuswap, to the three. "Take what you desire for your journey, and go forth. Here are furs, and here strong medicines. Take all. The great God guard you upon the seas and upon the land whither you go to dwell."

So the two Englishmen and the French girl went forth under the winter sky, where a shy moon peeped through laced clouds like a fair maid looking between the curtains of her bed. A dull glow of firelight showed when they looked back into the hollow; and once, when they paused for breath, their ears became filled with the wild sound of singing for the dead.

Morning dawned, and the brigantine was well away, running with a fresh breeze from the colony of France, all hearts aboard as light as the frosty waves which kissed her sides. Through fog and snow she went, like a bird flying to the warmth. Little wonder that the men sang at their tasks; that Upcliff repeated his old stories of the main with a fresh delight, none grudging him a laugh; that Woodfield gathered health at every hour; that Madeleine laughed from morn to night. They were as children released from school, playing on the happy home-going.

So the *Dartmouth* drew down to Boston quay, after one delay on the unfrequented shore to make repairs, the men clanking at the pumps to keep the leaking barque above the line of danger. The citizens flocked down to meet her, and Hough's approving gaze fell upon Puritan faces among whom he could feel himself indeed at home.

Winthrop himself was called to give the sailors welcome to New England. He stepped aboard, and

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grasped the master's hand ; but not a word could he utter before Madeleine came between them, her beauty all in splendour, her mouth quivering, as she cried :

"Tell me, sir—tell me quickly, where is my Geoffrey?"

She had forgotten that other men bearing her lover's name walked the earth. Winthrop stared in some bewilderment, and the more stern of his following frowned at so much glorious life and impetuous loveliness. The majority repeated the name with ominous shakings of bearded chins.

"'Tis our comrade, young Geoffrey Viner, of whom the maid speaks," said Woodfield in explanation.

"Yes," exclaimed Madeleine. "Let me off the ship."

"Stay," said Winthrop. "The young man is here indeed." He turned to Hough with the demand: "Is he beyond doubt a true Englishman?"

"True!" exclaimed Madeleine, her violet eyes two angry flashes. "You suspect him? Oh, you false man!"

It was the first time that John Winthrop had been accused of falseness; and the novelty of the accusation brought a smile to his face.

"The boy is loyal to the faith, and as true an Englishman as yourself, brother Winthrop," broke in the voice of Hough.

"Let justice prevail where I rule," said the pious governor when he heard this. "I thank God that you have come in time. It has been proved to our satisfaction against this boy that he has conspired with the

Dutch for the capture of our town, and as I speak he lies under sentence of death. Thus the wisest judges err, and the humble of us ask Heaven to amend our faults."

Madeleine had paled very slightly while Winthrop spoke. Then she drew her small dignified self upright, and said very confidently: "I knew that we should arrive in time."

"Methinks we shall scarcely find any swifter messenger to bear the good news to the young man——" commenced the quiet voice of Roger Williams, who had joined his friend and governor upon the quay.

The end of the pastor's sentence became drowned in a shout of hearty laughter such as had never been heard before in Boston; for immediately he began to speak Madeleine picked up her skirt, and was already running like Atalanta, breathlessly demanding from those who stood by whether her feet were carrying her in the right way.

"Send a cheer after her, men of Somerset," shouted Silas Upcliff. "For, by my soul, a braver lass ne'er loved an Englishman!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PLOWSHARE.

It was summer in the year 1647, and over all the colony of Virginia there was peace. Fortunate were its settlers to be cut apart from their brethren in the isle of strife, where the deceitful king was imprisoned in his palace of Hampton Court, and the London citizens filled their streets with cries of "Parliament" and "Privilege." New England remained untouched by this wave of feeling, of which indeed it knew nothing, and its people went on planting their crops and gathering the increase, happy to be removed from the oppression of a king and the persecution of the Church.

Upon the south side of the Potomac, at no great distance from the sea, stood a two-storey house overhung with wild vines, and approached by a ladder-like flight of steps which rose between two borders of flowers. Behind a plantation stretched in a straight mile, fringed on either side by sweet-smelling bush, where purple butterflies played through the long day and a silver stream laughed on its way to the sea.

The Grove, as this homestead was named, had quickly identified itself among the successful colonial ventures. The day of small things was rapidly nearing its close. Not only were the joint owners of the plantation able to supply the neighbouring village with wheatmeal and cheeses, but their export busi-

ness to the Old World was growing more profitable each season. The Virginian exporters, Viner and Woodfield, were well-known to import merchants of Bristol, and faded invoices of that firm were to be seen in more than one dusty counting-house a century later, when change and chance demanded a winding-up of the business of certain old-time traders across the seas.

This success was due not altogether to the energy of the partners who gave their names to the undertaking. It was commonly reported that the Lady of The Grove was in the main responsible for much of her husband's prosperity. According to rumour, Mistress Woodfield was an excellent housewife, clever at her needle, and with a better knowledge of simples than any woman in the New World, if methinks somewhat over-inclined to play the grand dame and careful against soiling her hands. With Mistress Viner it was otherwise. She was never to be found taking her ease in idleness, or retailing gossip concerning neighbours. Sloth, as once she said when rebuking the governor—for she feared no man—is an epidemic which claims more victims than the plague. Early in the morning she walked her garden, inhaling the sweet air, noting what progress had taken place during the night, ordering and arranging all things; and should her husband long delay joining her, how reproachfully she would call: "Geoffrey! Oh, slug! You are losing an hour of life." At fall of evening she would walk in the plantation beside her fair-haired lad, as she loved to call her lord and master, planning fresh improvements, and never failing to note the beauty of the life which slept around. Sel-

dom did she speak of the past ; never did she trouble her mind concerning the future. All would be well she knew. There could be no time so good as the present. "What do we want with past or future?" she would exclaim, when she caught her Geoffrey in retrospective or anticipatory mood. "Cold mirrors in which we see our silent selves like blocks of wood or stone. It is this minute which is our own glorious life." The cruellest, and falsest, thing that any woman could say concerning Madeleine Viner was that the fair mistress of The Grove had been seen wearing a sorrowful face.

The simple inscription, "An American Woman," was carved by her own desire over Mistress Viner's burying-place at the dawn of the eighteenth century ; and at a later date an unauthorised and unknown hand cut upon the shaft of the wooden column which stood upon her resting-place, and was destroyed by fire before Canada was wrested from the French, the not unsuitable motto, "Ride, si sapis."

Over the fireplace of the principal room in The Grove a ring was set in the hard oak woodwork. This ring contained a sigil engraved with the arms of the Iden family, a chevron between three close helmets, and was given a place of honour in the home because through its power Geoffrey obtained a letter of recommendation and a subsequent patent of land from that liberal-minded papist, Lord Baltimore, to whom the ring had been delivered upon the safe arrival of the *Dartmouth* in the Bay of Chesapeake.

"Better men never bled for England than the men of Kent," said the peer, when he had listened to Geoffrey's story. "Braver men ne'er fled from her shores

to save their loyal lives. The owner of this ring was once my honoured friend. His name has for long been most famous for devotion to the crown." The lord sighed and sadly added: "This Charles shall learn to rue the day when he first cast aside the help of his old loyalist families, and by oppression and persecution most intolerable drove them from their homes. But now, with God's help, we purpose to build up upon this continent a new people, greater and more clear-sighted than the old, and the motto of that people shall be, 'Liberty of thought and freedom in religion.' Tell me now, how shall I serve you?"

"I would settle, either in Maryland or in Virginia, and help to build up that new American people of whom you speak," the young man answered.

So Geoffrey Viner obtained favour in the eyes of Lord Baltimore by the power of the ring; and when the patent for the land issued, he and Woodfield forgot their former dreams of power, and, exchanging sword for axe, felled the big trees and cleared away the bush, that they might plough the virgin soil and plant their seed. As for stern Hough, he remained in Boston, to fight Satan, since he might no longer fight the French, and to preach the gloomy doctrine that he loved; and there he lived to a great age, and there suddenly died one winter morning in a bitterly cold church—for the religious feeling of the community would allow no physical comfort to the worshipper—with a Bible between his hands and a strained smile upon his face, as the preacher dilated upon a psalm-singing Heaven reserved for the elect, and a burning fiery furnace for all else. Hough had been a good

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man, according to the light which he had received, and doubtless the psalm-singing Heaven was his.

It was evening. Geoffrey and Madeleine walked hand in hand through their plantation, inhaling fragrance from the dewy blooms. Rain had fallen during the afternoon, but when the sun broke out, to bid the settlers good e'en, the country became a fairy-land. A sleepy bird piped on a distant branch. A pale evening star rose in the east where warm vapours were swimming in a silent sea. The peace was perfect in that true Arcadia. Wars were yet to horrify the province, but the shadow was not yet. For the present the sword was buried, and the earth brought forth fruit plenteously.

"If only I might have my wish!" exclaimed Madeleine, breaking a long silence.

Her husband looked at her, pressing her fingers within his, but answered nothing.

"I would have the whole world like this," she went on. "Geoffrey, we would not, if we could, seek to conceive a world more beautiful than ours. Yet how we spoil it by not knowing how to live! Were it my world I would banish all hypocrisy, all disputings over religion, all lust for power, and try to teach my people how to love. How to love, and nothing else."

"Making us perfect before our time," said Geoffrey, watching tenderly the evening lights playing across her hair.

"No, husband. We shall not attain perfection here. But it is from this country that a light shall proceed to spread throughout the world. Are we not already showing others how to live? What people

before us have ever dared to permit independence in thought and freedom in religion? We have already stripped the Church of its mysteries. We believe that a man may rise to God without a priest. We are going to grow very great on this side of the seas, and fly very high, and our motto shall always be Peace. Then we shall destroy all weapons of war, and break up armies, and settle down in brotherly love, each man upon his own plot of ground——"

"Envyng that of his neighbour," broke in her husband gently.

"Ah, Geoffrey! Scoffer! But mayhap 'tis a foolish dream. Could we but live in love, it might follow that the wolf would be ashamed to hunt the lamb, and would feed upon grass, and thus it might happen that our kine would lack. It is best as God ordains. The panther must remain fierce, the bindweed choke the flower, the rose grow its thorn, and the berry retain its poison. But would you walk in my garden, husband?"

"And see the devil changed into a monk?" asked Geoffrey with a smile.

"There is no devil in my garden," cried Madeleine joyously. "The snake has no bite, and the devil is dead of idleness. The angels show themselves among my roses."

"They are here," said Geoffrey simply. "Madeleine, sweet wife, before we met I followed the promptings of the body; but through your eyes I have seen the soul. It is not the soldier who wins life with his sword. He does but strive in a vain shadow, until that happy day—ill for him if it comes not—when there dawns upon his heart the light of love, and his

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mind is inspired, and his ears hear the stirring of wings, and his eyes are opened."

"What does he see, husband?" she asked carelessly.

"The sweet spirit of the woman who is sent to be his star."

They returned to their home in the sunset, and Madeleine was singing softly as she swung her husband's arm. The young matron ran forward, to be entranced and transfigured by the last sunrays, and kissed her fingers to the departing orb with a blithesome cry :

"Wake us before the morning bell, bright sun, and come not in clouds as you came to-day."

Upon entering the flower garden a resonant voice, alternating with tremendous bursts of glee, destroyed the stillness of the evening. Husband and wife looked at each other in complete understanding, and Madeleine held a finger to her lips, and motioned Geoffrey to advance on tip-toe. They pressed through a bower of roses, beneath a tangle of creepers, through tall rye-grass, and as they advanced the great voice came more strongly to their ears. At length they stood unseen within sight of their house front, and, drawing close together, laughed restrainedly.

Upon the topmost step, in a line with the entrance, sat a man of immense bulk, holding a pretty fair-haired child upon his mighty knee; and this child he was dancing up and down, shouting a quaint accompaniment meantime. Around his head trailed the luxuriant vines, covered with their fluffy white blooms, and the dainty humming-birds went whirring by, chasing in sport the hivebound bees.

Leaning back, and heaving his knee up and down, the big man continued to serenely bellow his nursery refrain :

"Ha ! Pieter von Donck ! Pieter von Donck ! 'Tis as cunning an old rogue as ever wore shoe-leather !"

"Funny man ! Do it again," chirruped Geoffrey Viner the younger.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

VALEDICTORY.

AND now in the days when the world is small, and ships of iron rush to and fro upon the seas, and the sword has become a burden, and the mightier plowshare ripples the plain, gone are the golden lilies, gone the power of the *soutane rouge*, gone the House of Bourbon; and two small islands of the gulf, St. Pierre and Miquelon, bound by their rocks and beaten by the waves, gather the harvest of the sea under the lion's protection, and mourn in their loneliness over that proud supremacy which has passed away for ever.

